STUDIES AND MEMORIES

C·V·STANFORD

R.C.B.L.

from

R.W.B.L.

Christmas, 1913.

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BY

C. V. STANFORD

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NOTE

My acknowledgments are due to the editors and proprietors of *The Times*, *The Spectator*, *The Daily Graphic*, *The Outlook*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *The Fortnightly*, *National*, and *Cambridge Reviews*, *The Cornhill* and *Murray's Magazines*, and the *Leisure Hour*, for kindly giving me permission to reprint articles which have already appeared in these periodicals. The article upon 'National Opera' is now printed for the first time.

C. V. S.

PREFATORY LETTER

My dear Charles Graves,—Having adopted your suggestion that I should reprint some papers, biographical and critical, which I have contributed to various periodicals during the last twenty-five years, I speedily found myself in the position rather of a critic than of an author. With the personal notices, consisting mainly of matters of fact, I had not much fault to find: with the critical it was far otherwise. For a man's opinions vary in a quarter of a century as do his bodily tissues, and upon many points I found myself as editor at loggerheads with myself as writer. I hold, however, that a collection of this sort, if it is to have any value at all, must be a genuine reprint, and not a Bowdlerised or sterilised version of the original. Such freshness as comes from the pen of a writer who is keen at the moment of carrying out his task, is lost in any process of cool and calculating reconsideration, and therefore I have left them alone (misprints and glaringly bad grammar excepted) in their original sin, such severity as is in them uneliminated, and such immature and hasty judgments as crop up at intervals uncorrected by later experience. For the human failings of a writer sometimes throw a sidelight (however dim and flickering) upon the history and progress of the time: and therefore I have even included such a red-hot and frankly brutal article as 'The Wagner Bubble,' not

because I value my own diatribes, or because I want to trample again upon the opinions which called it forth, but because it illustrates the difference of the estimation in which Wagner was held in this country in 1888 and 1908. Similarly, the transformation which the critical attitude towards what was 'the new English school' in the eighties has undergone in twenty years, would scarcely be appreciated by my readers if some of my younger tiltings at the Powers that Were disappeared from these pages.

This country has to thank you and a friend of yours for a phrase which, conceived in merriment, has the ring of a very vital truth. If you had given it to the world before some of these papers were printed, perhaps I, in spite of my impetuous instincts, would have so far profited by it as to make this volume too small to find a publisher. As, however, you are chief instigator of their reappearance, I have a lingering hope that you are acting up to the life-maxim which you formulated in the words, 'Wisdom while you wait.' As one of my oldest friends, I am sure that you have not advised me in the Biblical spirit, which desires that the book should be the handiwork of an enemy. If you turn out wrong in your estimate of its value, I can only hope that it will be a lesson to you that (without your gracious permission) you are saddled, willy-nilly, with its dedication.

C. V. Stanford.

July 1908.

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GENERAL STUDIES

THE CASE FOR NATIONAL OPERA

THE question of founding a National Opera in this country with a permanent home in the Metropolis has in recent years advanced several degrees towards its inevitable fulfilment. The Memorial to the London County Council[1] with the signatures of men of all sides in politics and all interests in social questions, both musical and non-musical, marked the first step. The careful consideration given by the Council to the Memorial, the evidence it called, and the report it issued (admitting the need for such an institution) marked the second. This was the first occasion when the project had so far come within the range of practical politics as to be treated by a representative public body with serious inquiry and with obviously sympathetic interest. There was no question that the educational value and civilising influence of such a great artistic plan was thoroughly realised even by men who had no practical knowledge of or personal enthusiasm for music in itself. They were awake to the fact that every other European country of importance possessed such institutions, and preserved them, and therefore that the collective wisdom of the Continent had gauged the value of it as a means of elevating and educating the masses of its people. They saw States far poorer in resources and population than our

[1] The text is printed at the end of this paper.

own valuing and perpetuating a priceless possession which was denied to England. The result was, as it so often is in this country, a pious opinion. The Committee of the Council went so far as to advise the reservation of a plot of suitable land for the erection of an Opera House, but they called public attention to the fact that the State, while providing for other arts, 'devotes hardly any funds to music,' and pointed out that it would be fair to expect it at least to co-operate in such an undertaking.

Shortly afterwards a sum of over £300,000 was expended by the Council upon the Thames Steamboats, mostly now for sale; and the estimated deficiency on this year's working is over seventy-five per cent. in excess of the sum required to provide a subvention for a National Opera House. Of these figures I will speak presently. Meantime we at any rate did get a favourable opinion: to have got it at all was a gain, and is an asset for future use. How are we to use it?

In order to discuss the question with any thoroughness we must look back at the musical policy of other countries and at that of our own. It will be found that without doubt England has been putting the cart before the horse. Elsewhere the National Stage is founded first, and the schools for training successions of artists for it afterwards. The date of Lulli's control of the State Opera in Paris was 1672, that of the foundation of the Conservatoire was 1795. England has begun by providing the schools to educate artists, and founds no institutions to employ them when they are educated. We are beginning to reap the inevitable harvest of this short-sighted policy.

At the present moment the enthusiasm and awakening of the last twenty years in musical art is at a height in this country which has not been known for centuries. From folk-music to the most complex modern forms of composition, from great choral festivals with bodies of singers unrivalled in any other country, to the country competitions, which prove the interest felt throughout the land, every department of the art is advancing with the sole exception of the one branch which the rest of Europe has rated as the most important of all, dramatic music. For not only is it the most direct in its appeal to every class, but it gives the maximum of employment and incentive to the profession, as well as to many other crafts, scenic, poetic, and scientific. If we do not soon provide this outlet for the talent and genius of the country, the result will soon be felt in the schools, not perhaps so much in quantity as in quality. When the rising generation who gain scholarships and educate themselves up to the mark of public performance find out in increasing numbers every year that they have nothing to look forward to at the end of their training, they will advise their successors to adopt other more remunerative and less disappointing occupations, and the schools founded for serious and professional training will become happy hunting-grounds for amateurs. Already our music schools are suffering from a lack of male pupils, and are peopled by girls in the proportion of three or four to one : a state of things which does not exist in countries where national and municipal Opera Houses exist. If the men saw the possibility of a career, the proportion would speedily right itself. In countries where scholarships are

fewer and less liberally endowed than they are in England, poor men go through privations (as many great Englishmen did at the Universities) for the sake of the chance of a distinguished position in an art to which they are devoted. Here where the prizes are numerous and rich, the main incentive to earnest work, when they are gained, is necessarily absent. So it is that we are in danger, and imminent danger, of a set-back of the clock, of losing touch with the most ennobling, the most civilising (because it is the most far-reaching to all classes) of all the arts, just at the very moment when the country is at the highest point of enthusiasm for it. Throttle this enthusiasm now, and away goes England's chance for generations. Shortly before his death, Brahms told one of his intimate friends that it was to England that the coming generation must look for musical creations, 'for,' he said, 'they understand how to train and teach, and you will certainly see something come out of that country.' He did not say this without a full knowledge of English works, of which he possessed many specimens. Only the other day one of the most keen-sighted and well-equipped foreign composers of our day said to me, 'England is sane, sound and wholesome in her creative work, and the soil is virgin and rich.' In view of these weighty opinions, the carelessness which would throw away such opportunities now seems little short of criminal. Peradventure the talent which we are burying in this rich soil of ours will be given to those who have already ten talents. Quite recently one of our most rising young singers was offered a contract as a leading artist in the Munich Opera House, and this is no isolated case.

One of the idiosyncrasies of England is to identify the term Art with only one of its branches. All other countries, with the exception of our own, include music under this head. So has it been also with official England's attitude towards music. While every possible assistance, state and municipal, is given to painting and to literature, none is forthcoming for her. What wonder if this gives occasion to the foreigner to write us down unmusical? He sees our national galleries and our museums endowed and enriched with the best of ancient and contemporary works, and the building to which he gives equal prominence in all his centres of population, the National Theatre, non-existent. Small wonder that he presumes that we possess no works to produce in it and no talent to perform in it. If this reproach were removed, what an awakening he would have! The English School of Painting he has learnt to appraise at its true value, because he can see it. The English School of Dramatic Music he knows nothing of, because he cannot hear it. He therefore makes haste to supply the deficiency himself; and as we cannot get on without some form of it, lest perchance we forget that there is such a thing as opera and dramatic singing at all, he makes us pay so prodigiously for the pleasure of hearing him, that the music-loving masses of the people are precluded from hearing operas even in a language which fails to convey to them the sense of what is being performed. In other words we, who are perfectly capable of growing fine fruit in open-air orchards of our own, are compelled to eat foreign produce at hot-house prices or go without it. There follows the natural result that

this foreign opera becomes a rendezvous for society, that fashion and not musical taste dictates its policy, and that its votaries go, not to hear an opera, however great, for the sake of the beauty of the music, but to hear the singer or singers who are to appear in it. Perform the *Meistersinger* with an excellent all-round caste, of which the singers' names are unknown, and empty benches are the reward, as long as the empty benches are at prices beyond the reach of the music-loving rather than the diamond-loving public. Announce an ancient and worn-out work (which even its composer grew to despise), to show off the roulades of one *prima donna*, and to give them a chance of comparing them with the roulades of another, and society will see the prospect of some such excitement as wrestling contests and football matches provide for the poorer brethren, and will rush in all its finery to 'assist.' The feeble voice of some musical denizen of the top gallery may cry out for an occasional hearing of Mozart or Beethoven, but in vain. The vocal Hackenschmidts are the attraction for the big-monied battalions, and music may go to the wall. Our musical forefathers both here and in France fought also over rival operatic claims, but they were not those of the performers but of the men who created the art-works. In comparison with our latter-day rivalries, how different in dignity and in appreciation of the fitness of things was the taste which discussed the relative merits of a Handel and a Buononcini, of a Piccini and a Gluck.

I need not waste space in arguing for the importance of the National Theatre as a necessity to the

well-being of a country. What the Greeks prized so highly, what such great minds as Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, Weber and Wagner, Molière, Racine, Corneille, Lulli, Rameau and Gluck looked upon as an essential, and were supported by the statesmen and rulers of their time in founding and preserving, may reasonably be accepted as a principle beyond the need of apology or discussion. They were convinced of its importance as a living force in civilisation and education, and the judgment of their successors has cemented the Institution, because of their experience of its beneficial effects. To this force this country, which produced a dramatist greater than any of theirs, has been too long wilfully blind; content to produce her Shakespeare (or such portions of him as will pay at the box-office) at odd intervals, and to leave it to local theatres in Germany to give complete cycles of the history plays in a foreign tongue. The recent move for the foundation of a National Theatre for the drama suggests the possibility of combining it with an effort to found a National Opera House. To do so would be only in accordance with precedent (that fetish of English officialism) and with the history of other states. There is no capital or important municipality in Europe outside England without both. But to combine both drama and opera in one house would be a vast mistake. A theatre large enough for the *Walküre* is too large for the *School for Scandal*, and, apart from the question of size, the exigencies of rehearsal would cause endless clashings and difficulties, and would endanger the excellence of the performances. In Leipzig, for example, where the great tragedies and spectacular

plays are given in the Opera House, there is (as in most other municipalities in Germany) a second theatre of smaller capacity, and the two stages are available for rehearsal. The most feasible and also the most economical plan would be the erection of two theatres, side by side, one of moderate and the other of large size with a contiguous, or rather continuous stage, as in the case of the Residenz-Theater and Opera House at Munich. The stage machinery can thus be worked by one staff, and there can be a common wardrobe. The smaller operas (such as Mozart's *Così fan tutte*) can be housed in a building not too large to sacrifice their beauty of detail, and the larger plays, especially those which require adequate musical accompaniment, such as the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Egmont*, and *The Tempest*, can be performed without any strain or extra financial expenditure. This brings me to the question of finance.

I am well aware that a strong prejudice exists in some quarters in this country against the subvention to or endowment of a theatre. The same hands which applaud the purchase of a Raphael for the National Gallery are held up in horror at the expenditure of a much smaller sum for providing the nation with a musical masterpiece. Surely the opponents of a subvention have not really thought out the logical results of their objections. The principle is either good or bad, and if it is bad for our country it is equally bad for other countries. Yet centuries of experience have not made all other countries think it anything but good. As a matter of fact there is no country in the world where opera (or a permanent drama) can be placed before the

people of moderate means without subvention; and if Europe to-morrow decided that the principle of subvention was wrong, and suspended it, *opera would cease to exist altogether.* Society here would not be able to enjoy itself even with the rivalries of singers, because there would be no Opera Houses abroad to bring them out; the masterpieces of Gluck, Mozart, Weber, Wagner, Rossini, Verdi, *et hoc genus omne* would become as the back numbers of a forgotten periodical. Even the little opera we get is existing solely on the result of foreign subvention to foreign theatres. Frenchmen are no fools either in finance or in political acumen. Is it likely that they would spend the sums they do, supporting four State theatres even in Paris alone, unless they knew and were convinced from the experience of generations that they got their money back in fruitful measure? They have got their reward in the masterpieces they have given to the world, in improving the taste and raising the tone of the public, in the pure pronunciation of their language, in giving interesting and permanent work to hundreds and thousands of executive artists, musical, pictorial and scientific, in allowing the poorer classes, who cannot afford the immense prices by which alone private ventures of opera on a metropolitan scale can exist, to hear and see, and bring up their children to know, the great works of the stage for a sum proportionate to their means. To a Frenchman the Académie de la Musique and the Théâtre Français are as important national possessions as the Louvre and the Luxembourg. If any government ventured to suspend their subventions and so destroy them, there would certainly be barricades.

The estimates for the formation of such an enterprise as this have been in my opinion excessive. We never have had experience in this country of a theatre whose finances are permanently secured. Therefore we have had no experience of the great saving which results from being in a position to offer long contracts to performers. The singer, orchestral player, and official, who is uncertain about the soundness of the theatre's exchequer, will ask and will get a far larger salary than he would be content with if his engagement were long and safe. This applies to all the staff of a theatre. If, as is mostly the case abroad, a pension fund also is established, expenses tend to diminish still further. It cannot be too clearly understood that the frequent failures to establish permanent opera in this country have been mainly due to this uncertainty of tenure. These increased payments necessitate higher prices, and the consequent alienation of the greater part of the public.

The latest of these failures, which is most persistently quoted as the proof that English Opera in London were best left alone, the English Opera House in Shaftesbury Avenue, is no criterion at all. Started upon the fatal principle of the 'run,' a test which the best opera ever written could never stand (for who would want to hear even *Don Giovanni* every night for three months), without any repertory, with no definite policy and no assurance of continued existence, its failure was in the eyes of even the least experienced theatre manager a foregone conclusion. If Mr. Carte could have carried out his own views (which were broad, sound, and rational) the Opera House would not now be a music hall. He had

not a free hand, and suffered in consequence—in company with the cause of National Opera *pro tem.* His evidence to the County Council made clear however his thorough belief in the success of such an undertaking if run on the lines which he himself would have wished. The director of one of the most successful municipal theatres in Germany, who had also had ample experience in Austria and Russia, was markedly optimistic about the prospects of such an undertaking. He pointed out that an Opera House well furnished with comfortable cheap seats had more prospect of independent financial success in London than in any other capital: for the simple reason that (if placed in a suitably central position) it had a larger population to appeal to than any other in existence. He also insisted on the opportunity England would have in starting fresh, untrammelled by any cut-and-dry traditions, with eyes and ears alert to absorb the best ideas and reject the worst both in performance and in administration. In this view he recalled a pious wish of Hans von Bülow, who, after a second-rate performance of Mozart's *Figaro* at Hamburg, unburthened himself to me thus: 'You know what a Buss-Tag (Fast-day) in Germany is? Theatres shut, no music anywhere. Well, we want a Buss-Jahr (Fast-Year) here. Then the artists will forget all their operas, and we can rehearse them properly like new ones. Then we shall have a Mozart worth hearing.' England's Fast-Year has been rather Fast-Centuries.

The *advocatus diaboli* will now ask, If an Opera House is likely to be so successful, why require an endowment or subvention? Precisely because to be

of national use its repertory must be to a reasonable extent independent of box-office considerations. Unfamiliar works rarely become profitable until they are well known. Many of the great financial successes amongst operas have begun their career in failure, notably *Carmen* and *Faust*. If these two operas had been produced on a stage wholly dependent upon profits, they could not have won their way to success. Many of the finest operas upon the stage do not attract an audience large enough to meet their cost; none the less they should be heard for the sake of the public and of the art. To expel them would mean to leave the world in ignorance of most of Gluck, of Beethoven, and of Weber. The same holds true of many of the plays of Shakespeare, which are (here) only known from reading them. I once saw the whole cycle of the Historical Plays produced in a State Theatre in Germany. The house was only half full, but that half was provided for in the public interest: and the cycle was a regular institution irrespective of profits. Even in London the success of the Doré Gallery did not supply an argument for suspending State support to the National Gallery; the Government knew perfectly well that its own Institution could not be self-supporting; and that the great works of Art must be kept within reach of the people, whether they go in paying numbers or not.

The other fallacy in the question is in the word 'likely' to be successful. I have shown that, in order to run opera on sound economical lines, there must be certainty and not likelihood. If the endowment is not drawn upon so much the better for the pension

fund. If it is not there to draw upon, every salary will be increased by twenty-five to fifty per cent.

I will now turn from arguments to figures, without which no practical suggestion or action can be taken: and I will confine myself to the estimates of an opera house only, which will be sufficient for the purpose. It is easy to deduce those of a smaller theatre, by rule of three.

We want then—

1. A site.
2. A building.
3. An endowment or (as in other countries) a subvention.

1. *The Site.*—I have already mentioned that the County Council approved the principle of reserving a central and suitable site. It is convenient also from the State point of view to quote our useful fetish, precedent, and remind the Powers that Be of a site and of a house which was provided practically free of cost for the Royal Academy. Happy painters and sculptors! Forgive us, your musical brethren in art, if we envy you a little your monopoly of State support; you are broad-minded enough to know in your souls that we ought to be given our opportunity also to enrich the world with beauty. And you know also that mighty and ennobling as your branch of the family is, it appeals rather to the cultivated eye, and many a semi-civilised and even uncivilised mind which is too primitive to appreciate you can be touched by beauty of sound. But we do not ask for any of your property, only for a fair share of the consideration you get, and we shall be a much less expensive item in the Estimates than you are. For

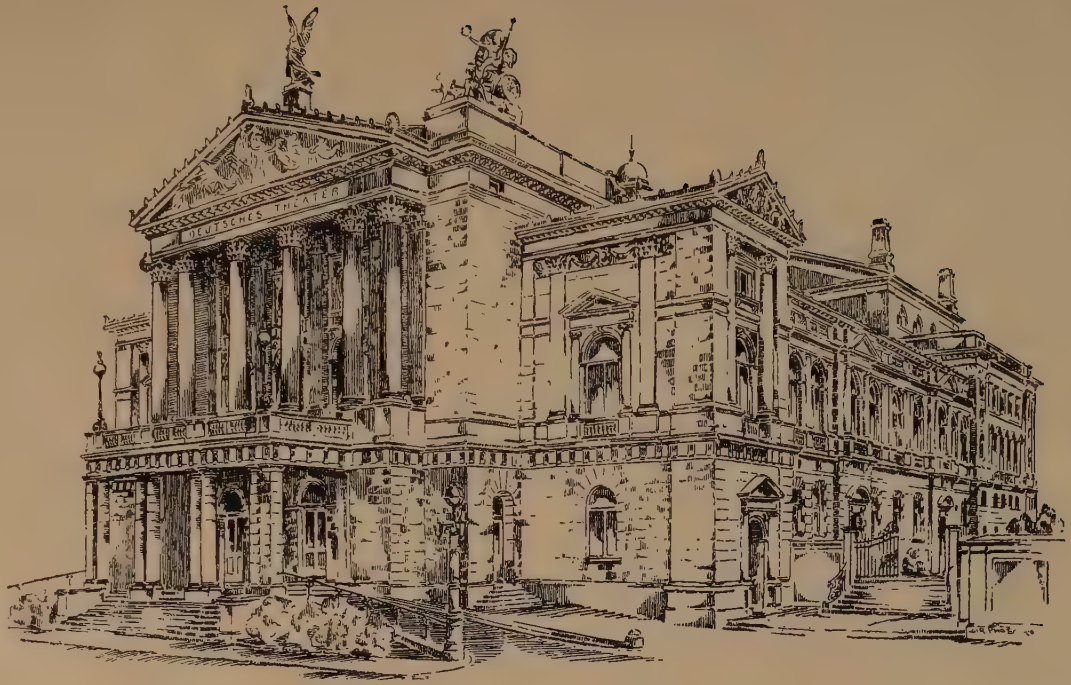
our success, however, the site must be central, and within reach of all, high and low, rich and poor.

2. *The Building.*—We do not want a frame so gorgeous as to distract attention from the picture. Marble staircases, and elaborate details of painting and sculpture are unnecessary and even disturbing. Simplicity, dignity of design, comfortable seats, good acoustics, sufficiency of exits, are the main considerations. Most of the great foreign Opera Houses suffer from extravagance of ornamentation. The most impressive are those of the simplest design, such as Bayreuth, Munich, or Hanover. One of the most suitable for comparison and estimate is the German Theatre at Prague. This fine house, which stands by itself in an open space, seats 1800 persons, and cost only £43,200 to erect. Allowing for increased seating accommodation, and for an addition of 25 per cent. for English labour, the cost of such a building in London ought not to exceed £100,000.[1] A comparison with the Czech National Theatre in the same town,[2] will show the extra cost of unnecessary (and less beautiful) decorative detail. This house cost £135,000, and only seats 200 more spectators: money thrown away upon superfluous and unsatisfactory ornamentation.

3. *The Endowment or Subvention.*—For this the Théâtre de la Monnaie at Brussels supplies an excellent parallel. The subvention is £10,000 a year; the yearly expenses about £39,000. We may assume then that a subvention of one-fourth of the

[1] An account of this theatre can be seen in Sachs' *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres*, vol. i. p. 17, which also contains full architectural plans and details.

[2] This can be seen in the same work.



THE GERMAN THEATRE AT PRAGUE.

By permission. From "Modern Opera Houses and Theatres," by Edwin O. Sachs. Vol. I.

expenses is sufficient for the purpose of security. A few other examples of municipal theatres may be quoted: at Lyons, Bordeaux, and Toulouse, the town votes a yearly subsidy of £9000. In Frankfort and Breslau, £10,000: in Geneva the city provided a site, built an Opera House at the cost of £152,000, and votes a subsidy of £7500. One of the most experienced of the foreign managers estimates the necessities of the London project at £10,000, but added that he thought this sum would soon not be required in toto, and that the surplus might go to founding a pension-fund. Mr. Carte also was of opinion that the subsidy would certainly be only a security, and would be little if at all drawn upon. All agreed that without it or an endowment the experiment could not be begun with any prospect of success, and that the life of the theatre should be assured for five years at least in order to tide over the initial stage, necessary to all new undertakings, of accustoming the public to the existence of a new possession. We may now for purposes of comparison turn to consider the sums which the State provides for Painting, Sculpture, and Literature, and collections of *objets d'art*, and see what proportion the requirements of an Opera House bear to them.

I have already pointed out that Parliament gave a site and a building to the Royal Academy of Arts, representing a large capital sum. In 1907-8 the estimates voted by Parliament give these figures—

1. National Gallery (including Tate Gallery), ...	£17,233
2. National Portrait Gallery, . .	5,897
3. Wallace Collection, ...	6,454

4. British Museum (including Natural History Museum), . . . £171,041
In addition to this other votes supplemented these by the amount of . 67,796
And for the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert and Bethnal Green Museums, there are additional funds, included in the vote of the Board of Education, amounting to . . . 73,310

This is independent of the figures for Scotland and Ireland.

The total sum annually expended by the State on Literature and Art (in the accepted narrow term) is £341,731, of which £62,255 goes to the art of Painting alone. The total sum expended by the State upon Music is £1000—a grant of £500 each to the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music—and that devoted solely to the purposes of training. Is this a fair proportion? Is this calculated to raise the position of England in the eyes of the world? The country which is unrivalled in choral singing and scarcely rivalled in instrumental playing, and which was pointed to by the greatest composer of our day as the country 'out of which something is bound to come'?

There are two current delusions about opera in English, which had better at once be mentioned and exposed. One, that the English language is not adapted for operatic purposes. The real meaning of this is that many of the translations of foreign operas are despicable in language and in style. That is a matter easily remedied; we are not devoid of men

capable of writing excellent and poetical English. No language is more perfect in its way for musical expression than that of the English Bible. What has proved itself unapproached in English Oratorio cannot be quite devoid of capabilities for the stage. The other delusion is that English singers cannot adapt themselves to dramatic work. The answer to that was supplied by the recent performance of the *Ring of the Nibelungen*, which (although several of our leading English artists were absent from the caste) was given in a way which amply satisfied the conductor of the first performance at Bayreuth, and which, according to the testimony of one of the first musicians of the country (who was present at both), was far better sung by the English in 1908 than by the Germans in 1876.

On one point the policy must be immutable. The prices of admission must not exceed those of the ordinary theatre, from 10s. 6d. to 1s. A system of subscription, such as prevails in all Opera Houses, must be the backbone of the treasury, and the repertory must be sufficiently large and varied to attract subscribers, and to make the cheaper parts of the house acquainted with masterpieces of all schools. A special point must be made of encouraging (as the Paris Opera House is compelled to do by law) the native production of dramatic music, by performing a certain fixed minimum of new English work. The recent competition for a prize opera by Englishmen, which was lately instituted by Messrs. Ricordi, made it abundantly clear that there is no lack of supply in this respect. The sequel of the competition is a curious comment upon our present doleful state. The

prize opera was promised a production during the present season.[1] It has not been given, because after the promise was made, a condition was imposed that it, an English Opera written to an English book by an English composer, would have to be translated into Italian in order to be presented to an English public in an English theatre during the opera season. Imagine the authorities of the Scala, having promised Puccini a production of his first opera, insisting upon its translation into Russian for presentation to an Italian audience! Our country is producing in curiously large quantities anti-English Englishmen, but no more glaring example could be found than this of the unpatriotic spirit which prevails in operatic ventures run for profit at fancy prices. Whatever aspirations the head may have, the tail wags it.

Neither is it necessary, in order that National Opera should succeed, that exotic opera should cease. There is room for both; what appeals to the audience of the one will not necessarily appeal to that of the other. Nor is it imperative that their seasons should clash. The best period for the cheaper audience would be from October to Easter, and the summer months might be left as a monopoly for higher prices and more luxurious surroundings. When the English season is finished in London, the resources of the theatre can be employed in spreading the light in other centres, both in the provinces and in outer London.

I have little doubt that if this great institution is once founded it will not be confined to London alone. Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and other populous centres will soon be actuated

[1] May to July, 1908.

by a healthy rivalry to compete. Once prove to the English public that dramatic music is a living force for good, and it will make its way as choral singing and local competitive festivals have done. We shall hear less then of the overcrowding of the musical profession, of the foreigner taking the bread out of our mouths, of the difficulty of getting artists to believe that other centres besides London exist in these islands. Having a living and thriving dramatic school of English music we shall be able to speak with our enemies in the gate. The prejudices which exist against our country's capabilities will begin to give place to a wholesome respect. The feeling abroad which, while exploiting us as a Tom Tiddler's ground for every budding foreign artist, bangs, bolts, and bars the door against any incursions from our side, will begin to consider whether reciprocity is not after all the wiser policy, whether the basic truth which underlies that proverb of the foreigner's own making, 'Art has no frontiers,' does not apply to a sea as well as to a land boundary.

The days when music was regarded as a frivolous amusement in this country are all but numbered. We have our responsibilities as well as, and in proportion to, our artistic endowment. The broadest and most far-seeing minds abroad have recognised our capabilities, and to them we must be true. The effort needed to make clear our position in the world and to assure its permanence does not call for any excessive financial outlay to assist it. What man has done, man can do. What Europe has done, England can do. The most difficult rock to surmount is prejudice, the fixed, innate dislike of Englishmen to make a new

departure. But we make them even in the building of *Dreadnoughts*, and if we did not we should meet with the inevitable penalty meted out to those who stand still. We ask a site, a building costing £100,000, and £10,000 a year for music from a State which has done the like for the sister arts at thirty times the outlay required for music.

Text of the petition for a permanent Opera House for London, presented to the London County Council on June 27, 1898 :—

The humble petition of the undersigned sheweth as follows:

1. That in this, the richest capital in the world, there exists no means whereby the highest class of operatic music can be systematically brought within the reach of the great mass of the people.

2. That under existing conditions the very classes of the community which would benefit most constantly by the presentation of the greatest operatic masterpieces are now debarred from enjoying such a privilege, and the musical education of the public is thereby much restricted.

3. That, for this reason, little encouragement is offered to young artists to pursue the highest paths of their profession, and little opportunity is afforded for their advancement in them.

4. That the development of native operatic art is seriously hindered and discouraged by the lack of any permanent establishment where the works of native composers can be produced.

5. That in most of the important towns in Europe it has been found practicable, with the assistance of the public authorities and at no great cost to the public exchequer, to make provision for the systematic representation of the best class of opera, which has thus, by long-established usage, become part of the life of the people.

6. That it would be possible for your Council, by an annual grant of money of no excessive amount, to bring about the

establishment of a permanent Opera House in London, which would fulfil the requirements hereinbefore set forth and thereby promote the musical interests and refinement of the public and the advancement of the art of music.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray as follows—

That your Council should take such steps as to them appear advisable to ascertain how the great want referred to above can be best supplied; and if deemed necessary, to obtain powers to devote some portion of their funds to assist in the maintenance of an Opera House for the promotion of the highest form of musical art.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition was signed by one hundred and forty persons, including many occupying very prominent positions in the country, and in the first clause of their report, the General Purposes Committee of the Council, to whom it was referred, state that 'the encouragement of the higher forms of musical art is greatly needed in London, and if accorded wisely, either by the state or the municipality, it would be attended with very beneficial results to the whole community.'

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORCHESTRAS IN ENGLAND

(1883)

[This paper, written in 1883, I have reprinted mainly as giving an interesting comparison between the conditions which prevailed in England a quarter of a century ago and to-day. The idea in itself is still no negligible one, and though the vast spread of orchestral music, and the increased advantages in training which instrumental players receive, have filled a much-needed gap, it says a word for decentralisation which is not without importance. I may mention that the increase in the numbers and efficiency of local orchestras has already resulted in 'the large and healthy increase of English composers,' which their absence in 1883 debarred me from expecting.]

A RECENT letter from M. Gounod to the French Senate, in which the names of more than one composer of the English school were mentioned, appears to have met with less notice at the hands of the press in this country than was demanded by a question of such importance. In a fervent appeal to the Legislature that State support to the cathedral chapters should be continued or increased, the composer claimed for those bodies the honour of being the nursery of music in the country districts of France. Its reception at the hands of the French Senate was characteristic of a country in which freedom of opinion is only per-

missible to those who agree with the Government of the day or hour. The results of the rebuff which M. Gounod received in the cause of his art have yet to be felt. It is, however, quite possible that, owing to the very different conditions under which ecclesiastical music lives—it can hardly be said to thrive—in modern provincial France, the results of the suspension of State support may be less productive of mischief to the art than would be the case under similar circumstances in provincial England. We may, however, take a lesson from the incident, although there is happily at present no immediate prospect of State interference in the musical education carried on by our cathedral bodies. The question for us rather should be how to improve and extend that education; how to spread its effects, which have hitherto been beneficial in a narrow sphere only, over the still barren field of provincial music; in a word, how the cathedral bodies throughout the kingdom can begin to teach music, not with a view to their daily services alone, but also for the sake of the art itself and the future useful careers of the boys they educate in their choir schools.

England, as a whole, has one very strong and one very weak point in her musical position. Her strength lies in the wealth of choral societies; her weakness in the dearth of provincial orchestras. It may be that the very excellence of the choral singing is the cause of this dearth of orchestras, by reason of the combination of the greatest possible pleasure with the least possible trouble which is afforded by singing in a chorus. But certain it is, whatever the cause may be, that there is at present an almost total absence of

local orchestras in the provinces. With the exception of London and Manchester, there are none of the first rank. Bristol, where Mr. Riseley has been making a determined effort for the cause, draws its orchestra partly from London and from Birmingham. Liverpool, with many orchestral players of its own, has still to draw upon Manchester for many players. Birmingham is developing an orchestra, and an effort has also been made in Cork and Dublin. But what of the other great towns? Glasgow imports an entire London orchestra headed by a London conductor for its Choral Union concerts; Edinburgh utilises the same imported band on evenings when they are disengaged at Glasgow. Newcastle, where an effort was made by Mr. Rea, appears to have dropped the experiment. Leeds, Hull, Halifax, Plymouth, Norwich, and a dozen other large towns which might be named, boast no orchestra whatever. This weakness, then, exists, and its baneful results upon the musical development of the country can scarcely be doubted; orchestral music being absent, one of the chief instigations to musical invention is absent too, and a large and healthy increase of English composers is not to be expected. The question therefore arises how to make good the deficiency. One method seems at once to recommend itself, which, if properly handled, might be the forerunner of a new system in the country. We possess in every cathedral in England a small musical school, which is at present restricted to one department of the art only, that of singing sacred music, with occasional organ tuition to a promising pupil among the choristers. In addition to this school there is usually a choral society of the

district, which divides its interests between sacred and secular music. Here, then, is an untried field for orchestral tuition, which, apart from the improvement in musicianship which a study of instrumental music is sure to introduce, will be a valuable investment of the choristers' time, in view of the return from professional services which they will receive when employed in the orchestra of the town or district in which they live.

The organisation of a complete orchestra would be a matter of some years, perhaps; but, once started on a sure basis, the successive supply of players need never run short. The cathedral bodies themselves would be able at a moderate outlay to obtain orchestral support in the festival services which have been so largely on the increase during the last few years, and would have the additional satisfaction of knowing that the players were as much a product of their own school as the daily choir. The choral society, too, would be able to produce complete works at a comparatively small outlay; whereas at present either its financial resources are crippled by the expense of a London or Manchester orchestra, or its musical efficiency is impaired by the substitution of a piano or harmonium 'to fill up the wind.'

Having considered the advantages of this scheme, let us weigh the difficulties to be met; difficulties not by any means few or far between, but still not so severe as to counterbalance the admirable results of success. These difficulties may be said to be three—the cost of the instruments, the cost of tuition, and the providing of teachers. The first item of expense is the easiest to meet; it would be no great financial

risk for a society or cathedral chapter to purchase from time to time instruments for the pupils, on the understanding that they should either pay a small yearly sum for eventual possession, or play gratuitously (when efficient) at a certain number of performances, as an equivalent for the value of the instrument. It would be obviously important to point out to the pupil that the purchase of an instrument is a small investment of capital which the industry of its owner is sure to turn to profit. Then as to the cost of tuition. This is a serious item; but must again be considered by the society or Chapter as an investment for the ultimate benefit, not merely of the learners, but of themselves. It is an expense which will be heaviest at the first, and naturally decrease as the orchestra improves in experience and in quality. After the first start, many persons will see that it is to their own advantage to study an art which will render them capable of increasing their incomes by a pleasant and useful employment of their leisure hours. A more formidable difficulty faces us in the third question—namely, the providing of competent tuition. As regards the wind instruments, the proximity of most of our towns to some military centre renders it possible to obtain the services of a bandmaster; in the department of the stringed instruments, however, it will be almost a matter of necessity to induce some good player to take the lead in the teaching. A fair number of pupils for the violin or for accompaniment lessons is sufficient to ensure the residence in any district of a fair player, who would also lead the orchestra and instruct the strings at separate rehearsals. But in the case of a town where an insufficient

number of private pupils rendered the residence of a thoroughly good player impossible, a weekly visit to the district by a competent teacher would soon pave the way for a competent successor belonging to the town itself. The scheme, however, deserves a trial at the hands of our cathedral bodies and our provincial societies. The necessary outlay cannot but redound to the future advantage of the pupils of the choir school; and in its effects upon the general musical tendencies of the country, the result may prove to be out of all proportion greater than the initial difficulties. But the experiment, if it is to be made, must be made in earnest, without half-heartedness or half-measures.

It is hardly necessary to enlarge here upon that now common topic, the moral hold which art of all kinds has over a people. But a short example of its use may be mentioned. In the summer months in Germany, when the opera-houses are closed, it is an almost universal privilege enjoyed by the inhabitants of the towns to hear a good orchestra, often that of the town theatre, playing in some public garden or building, while the main part of the population are sitting at their suppers, or their coffee or *lager-bier*. The people come for social intercourse and to hear good music well performed. How different from an English country town, where the population may be roughly divided into two classes—the respectable, which stays at home, and the disreputable, which goes to the public-house. There is no common ground where all classes can meet and enjoy a recreation which can only be of benefit to both. Is it too much to hope that some action such as has been suggested,

ending in the foundation of local orchestras in the provinces, might be a strong and enduring means of raising the tone of public feeling? It certainly is not too much to expect that it will lead to a large increase in our musical productiveness. If its initiative came from those institutions which inspired Tallis, Gibbons and Purcell with their finest works, they would confer on the world a benefit which would be welcomed and appreciated by all creeds, classes, and shades of opinion, and produce results which no State interference could efface.

THE WAGNER BUBBLE

(1888)

[This article was a reply to one published under the same title in the *Nineteenth Century*. I have included it mainly to show the difference of the standards of criticism as applied to Wagner twenty years ago and to-day.]

Mr. Rowbotham's article in the October number of this Review would seem at first sight to have its best answer in the title which he has prefixed to it. To find its parallel in critical blindness one is forced back to the articles on Beethoven which appeared half a century ago in the *Musical Quarterly Review*. He covers, however, so large a ground, touching on literature, ethics, drama and music, that I may be pardoned if I confine myself to the consideration of the æsthetic portion of his article and leave ethics and Schopenhauer to those who understand them better than he or I. To me it is at once a difficult and a distasteful task to descend for the first time into the sanguinary arena of Wagnerian controversy. The sand is stained with the blood of many good Christians and many wild beasts, but we search in vain for the body of Mr. Rowbotham. He will be found aloft where the vestal virgins sit, with his critical thumb turned inexorably down. He looks at

the fray and the chief actors from a seat of safety sufficiently remote to require the aid of opera-glasses (or their antiquarian equivalent), which he has not taken care to clean before he leaves home. His arguments would even allow of the supposition that he has not himself been present, but has drawn his conclusions from the reports of others.

I have said that it is both difficult and distasteful to me to discuss Wagner, because at this date, when controversy on the subject is still warm, it is hard to defend Wagner without being written down as a Wagnerian by his opponents, and impossible to attack the least of one of his tenets without being smirched as an anti-Wagnerian by his supporters. Persons who consider that all human genius is liable to err, and that the best way to pass through life is to give praise where praise is due and to learn what is best without hunting for what is worst in great men, find themselves in the unenviable position of being attacked by both parties at once. Assuredly, however, their time will come, and in the case of Wagner it is close at hand. The controversy is still warm, but it is rapidly cooling; and the spasmodic application of Mr. Rowbotham's drawing-room bellows will scarcely do more than kindle a momentary spark and blow the ashes about to the annoyance of bystanders. I venture then to consider Mr. Rowbotham's statements from the point of view of one who does not necessarily accept as perfect every note of Bach, Handel, Gluck, Mozart, Weber, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, or Wagner, but who undoubtedly claims for the last that place among the immortals which is not denied him by his most

furious antagonists—with the exception of Mr. J. F. Rowbotham.

It will be interesting and instructive to follow piece by piece the method which he pursues and the statements which he makes. To find the authorities which he quotes for his statements will be impossible, for he is above giving chapter and verse for a single proposition. The first assertion which meets the eye is that Wagner's numerous worshippers asked Mr. Rowbotham and other musicians to believe 'that Beethoven, Handel, Bach, and all the great musicians, his precursors, were as nothing to him.' Where? I have never been asked to believe anything of the kind by my Wagnerian friends, and I have many: it would be interesting to know where this new gospel is to be found, in or out of print. Apart, however, from the fact that Mr. Rowbotham begins already in his second sentence to confound Wagner and his worshippers, just as later on he confounds Wagner the author and Wagner the musician, it will be as well to refer Mr. Rowbotham to the article 'Wagner' in *Grove's Dictionary*, written by one of the composer's intimate friends, which may lay bare to him the real facts of Wagner's appreciation of his precursors. If our critic possesses this document, he must have perused it with a glass applied to his eye after the fashion of Nelson at Copenhagen. Many sentences follow, all enclosed in inverted commas, all alike devoid of a reference. The Germans are sneered at, not for any reasons of philosophy or manners, but because they 'often stumble in their English,' a glib way of dismissing the countrymen of Kant and Goethe. I fear, however, that they will accord no

reciprocity treaty to Mr. Rowbotham—they will not 'accord him an attentive hearing,' be his German ever so faulty.

Under the influences, then, of these unidentified reviewers and illiterate Germans, 'the Wagner bubble' is blown to a portentous size, and mankind at large, and Mr. Rowbotham in particular, wait patiently to see an atmospheric phenomenon of the most startling description, namely, what influence it (the bubble) will have on the common practice of the art of music. But if the metaphors are somewhat mixed, the writer's way out of the difficulty is simple. 'None appeared'! Granting Mr. Rowbotham's premiss, no other conclusion is possible from his point of view. But both his premiss and conclusion are proved wrong by hard facts. The Wagner creations are no bubbles, or else they would not be the only works which are safe to fill the German theatres; and if they are bubbles they have not burst, for the performances at Bayreuth in the year of grace 1888 were better attended than they have ever been before. The fact is, Mr. Rowbotham is confusing two species. He is confusing the lion and the jackals; the noble animal and the inferior beings who exist on his leavings; the great man and his unthinking and illogical parasites. The literary jackals have blown bubbles, it is true; but even these contain their atoms of matter, and when they burst there will still be a fragile residue of soapsud which existed before the bubble and in the bubble, and will exist after the bubble has burst. It is this little particle of soap which has got into Mr. Rowbotham's eye and made it smart.

From the worshippers we are brought to the consideration of the idol himself. We find that he did not hit the exact style of writing in vogue at the time, and made several attempts to do so, which 'all alike resulted in deplorable failure.' If we were informed what these attempts were, we should be able to form a judgment on the deplorable failure. If *Die Feen* and the *Liebesverbot* are referred to, a failure might be admitted in the same sense as a failure is or was admitted for Weber's *Silvana*. But it is possible that the names of these operas may be new to our critic, and from the internal evidence of his article, he evidently does not mean these earliest works, but *The Flying Dutchman* and *Rienzi*. Against such statements as this, it is impossible and unnecessary to argue; it would only be necessary to state how many performances these two works have had this year, four decades and a half after their production.[1]

Following this astounding remark is a whole page of matter full of unauthenticated statements and absolutely confusing to the reader. The key of the difficulty is in the first sentence. Wagner's 'bent was exceedingly polemical. He would have made an excellent controversialist, and it was only through a caprice of destiny that he was a musician.' It is hard to believe that Mr. Rowbotham really thinks that Wagner's gifts, however much he disapproves their application, were a freak of chance. Wagner's worst enemies have hitherto allowed him his gifts while they insisted on his misapplication of those

[1] In the season of 1886-7 *Rienzi* was given thirty-five times, and *The Flying Dutchman* eighty-six times.

gifts; but they have acknowledged that it was the caprice of destiny that made him a controversialist. Many of his reasonable admirers regret this 'destiny,' and would have preferred him to stay his pen from many sentences which gave perhaps more pain than he was conscious of giving. But Mr. Rowbotham is for once right—his bent was polemical; and it was his misfortune that his position in the world of music was made more assailable during his lifetime by the very fact of his controversial writings being published. Critics and brother-artists when stung by his remarks might be forgiven for confusing the composer and the man. The publication of the Wagner-Liszt correspondence is likely, unfortunately, to revive for a brief space the consideration of the great man's least attractive side; but it will become year by year more impossible to judge of *Tristan* or *Parsifal* by the light of Wagner's human weaknesses in daily life. We have ceased to apply such judgment to Byron, in spite of the efforts of some ghouls, or even to Carlyle, notwithstanding Mr. Froude's friendly daggers; and the new motto of 'De mortuis nil nisi malum' will be forced out of fashion by its own hideousness.

Mr. Rowbotham asserts that Wagner, with his great controversial powers, made many converts. I, on the contrary, would assert that his controversial powers made many enemies, but next to no converts. A litigant who had a good case would not forward it by abusing the opponent's attorney as well. Mr. Rowbotham, having no case, or rather not having taken care to get his case up, follows the proverbial legal advice with a vengeance. He states, for in-

stance, that Wagner proclaimed that 'all else was wrong, and that what he wrote alone was right,' 'that operas henceforth must cease among men, and that their place must be taken by a new sort of production which was the offspring of his own brain,' that 'there was too much music in the opera as he found it,' and countless other vapourings of a similar description for which the writer not only has no authority at all, but is directly confuted by the composer's own writings. Has Mr. Rowbotham ever read *Ueber das Dirigiren*? or the title-page of the *Meistersinger*? or the letter upon the performance of Spohr's *Jessonda* at Leipzig in 1875, which Wagner came expressly from Bayreuth to hear? Mr. Rowbotham will be sorry to hear that this monster of ingratitude and egotism thus showed his regard and respect to the memory of the first great musician who gave him a helping hand, who introduced to the public for the first time that exploded failure *The Flying Dutchman*, who nearly resigned his post at Cassel because such empty rubbish as *Tannhäuser* was refused[1] by the Intendant.

But we are now brought down from generalities to particulars, and we are told (shades of Gluck and Weber!) that Wagner stated that 'all existing operas had been written on a wrong system'; and upon the basis of this perversion of truth Mr. Rowbotham proceeds to the discussion of Wagner's stage reforms. Here we might at least expect some small admission of success. But no! While Wagner objects to the tenor leaving 'his lover' at the back of the stage and

[1] On political grounds, in consequence of Wagner's Dresden escapades in 1848. Spohr (*teste* Joachim) was a strong Radical.

singing to the top gallery, Mr. Rowbotham approves of this vandalism on the theory that unless the singer sings upwards his voice cannot tell. Little does Mr. Rowbotham know that the greatest singing masters, witness Lamperti of Milan, recommend their pupils to sing downwards, in order that the voice may rise: but this is only a speck amongst the clouds of inaccuracies in the article. With the Liebeslied from the *Walküre*, the Forge Song from *Siegfried*, the countless songs in the *Meistersinger* staring him in the face, he asserts that Wagner eliminated airs from his operas, and condemned them to one eternal monotonous recitative. With all the marvellous choruses from the *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* (to name only two of the later works) to bear witness against him, he asserts that 'complicated contrapuntal passages are out of the question.' After this, he calmly states that 'opera after the severe shake it received from his attacks is now following its old beaten path again,' in blind ignorance of the fact that since Wagner's influence became extended, not an opera has been written in any country, not even by the strongest opponents of his musical theories, which has not borne the traces of his reforms upon every page: from Verdi to Goetz, from Gounod to Massenet, all are obliged to accept opera and carry it on from the point to which Wagner has brought it. If Othello were now to sing scales while Desdemona was being smothered, the house would hiss in spite of all Mr. Rowbotham's arguments; and the reason they would hiss is because Wagner has exposed the absurdity, and as far as can be has banished incongruity from the musical stage.

But the remarks of our critic grow more reckless as he proceeds on his path of fire and slaughter. Wagner is made to declare that 'no man could be a musician unless he were at one and the same time a poet' (by which, I suppose, is meant a writer of poetry). How then can Wagner's love for Gluck, for Beethoven, for Weber, be accounted for? How can we find him praising many works by the very men who, he is represented to say, were 'no musicians at all'? No! Wagner did not care for art, for the stage, for music, for poetry, for philosophy for their own sakes; he only mastered them and used them in order to vent his spleen, says Mr. Rowbotham. One step further and we shall be told that the theatre at Bayreuth was erected as a monument of vengeance, and that all the subscribers to it, and all visitors to the performances therein are only actuated by motives of hatred for the anti-Wagnerians. Has he ever been there?

When we come to the poetry section of this article, we are greeted by the statement that Wagner 'cuts a sorry figure in verse.' A little further on and we discover why: our critic apparently despises German so much, and is so afraid of qualifying for an attentive hearing by a few stumbles, that he gives the specimens, not in the original—that would be the solitary accuracy in the paper—but in a translation, which, he says, 'keeps pace with the original.' Mr. Corder will not thank him for the estimate or the comparison, for he knows, as well as any German scholar knows, the immense difficulty of conveying an idea of such a complicated original by any translation, and the impossibility of doing so when cramped

by the necessities of adapting syllables to music.[1] In any case specimens have been given which are perhaps the worst which could have been chosen; but this is to be expected in critics of Mr. Rowbotham's stamp. It is not a little amusing to find him, accurate as ever, describing Loki as the Prince of Darkness instead of the God of Fire. But then, perhaps, he had been reading *Faust* by mistake, and mixed up the scores. The quotation from *Tristan* is practically impossible except in the original, and it is only in its connection with the music set to it, and the manner of its setting, that it can be criticised at all. The disquisition on Schopenhauer and Wagner's misapprehension of him, with all the sweeping philosophical statements in which our author indulges, I leave to more learned pens than mine to discuss.

It is not, perhaps, Mr. Rowbotham's fault that he is unable to grasp the problem which he has set himself. Granting that he has seen most or all of Wagner's operas adequately performed—a necessary preliminary without which of course he would not have ventured to sit in judgment on the composer—it is obvious that he has only been able to apply the microscope to small separate details of the works, and is incapable, through no fault of his own, of taking in the whole at once. He talks of the music without considering the poetry, of the poetry without considering its connection with the music, of the action without considering the other two ingredients. He fails to see that scenery, poetry, music, action, all must be taken as a whole and considered as a whole.

[1] The problem has since been solved in masterly fashion by Mr. Frederick Jameson.

Hence an article which no musician or critic in Europe would venture to write, still less to sign. Its very intemperance of language proves the shakiness of the ground upon which he takes his stand. He might have assailed Wagner from many vulnerable points. I will make him a present of a few for future use. There may be many *longueurs* in his operas Wotan may be a bore, King Mark a trial to impatient pittites. The second act of the *Götterdämmerung* may close in what is best described as cacophony. The opening scene of *Parsifal* may be too spun out. The whole of *Lohengrin*, with the exception of the prayer and the bridal march, is in common time. He may be too fond of making two lovers stand gazing at each other for a quarter of an hour while a third person sings. All this and much more of the same sort can be made something of, and can be quoted with some show of reason. On the other hand, it is wise to remember that both the slow movement of the seventh symphony of Beethoven, and the finale of Schubert's great symphony in C, were once condemned as outrageously long, and yet who now would allow the omission of a single bar of them? After all is said, there remains the great solid fact that the eleven great operas of Wagner, ranging from 1844 to 1881, are all in actual possession of the stage, and draw fuller houses every year; moreover, the experience of concert-givers has proved that Beethoven and Wagner are almost the only names which allure large audiences to orchestral concerts. These are hard facts, and can be proved by hard cash; and when all arguments as to Wagner's music or cacophony are over, the public are the final Court of

Appeal. Mr. Rowbotham would be a bold man to prophesy the bursting of his bubble in our generation, considering that Wagner is approaching a half-century of musical existence; but to assert that it has burst already is to state what men's eyes and ears and pockets know to be absolutely false. He concludes his article with a slight token of respect for the 'little' opera of *Lohengrin*. I may for once endorse his prophecy of a future existence for this opera, together with the little poem of *In Memoriam*, the insignificant novel of *Vanity Fair*, the poor daubs of Turner, and the paltry portraits of Lenbach.

MUSIC IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

(A LECTURE DELIVERED TO THE MANAGERS OF THE LONDON BOARD SCHOOLS IN 1889)

THE subject of Music in Elementary Schools is one of such importance for the future artistic life of the country, and one of such wide and varied considerations, that I can scarcely expect to deal at all adequately with it in the space of a single lecture. I can only hope, by laying down general considerations, which seem to me to be of the highest importance and to have been unduly neglected by the authorities, to enlist your sympathies for my reasoning, even if I fail to enlist what I should prefer to have, your co-operation.

The whole introduction of music as an authorised branch of study into our school system is too recent to be perfect in its details. It would be unreasonable on my part to expect such perfection, but it would be equally unreasonable on yours to shut your eyes to the many faults which cause that imperfection. I shall therefore endeavour to point out some chief errors of system which seem to me to cry out for reform and readjustment. Even if you take exception to my crude suggestions as to their amelioration, I shall have carried out more than half of my programme, if I make it clear to you that such errors

exist. I fear I shall have to state an unsavoury fact at the very beginning of the lecture. I am in no sense of the word a pessimist, and if I have to express my belief in this unsavoury fact—a belief which is certainly borne out by the actions of responsible and far-seeing statesmen—you will see that I find some means of alleviating its results if not of eventually counteracting them. My proposition is this: that the first effect of education upon the uneducated masses is the development of socialistic and even of revolutionary ideas amongst them. We are now carrying out a species of repetition of the story of man's fall: but with a difference. When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he was under no compulsion, unless indeed you can apply such a term to the persuasive powers of a wife. We in the nineteenth century are going a step further, and are fining and prosecuting Adam's less fortunate descendants if they prefer not to eat the fruit. The gentle persuasion of woman has given place to the official compulsion of the School Board. Those of you who have watched with interest the home policy of Germany will not fail to have noted, that Prince Bismarck was alive at once to the necessity and to the danger of popular and compulsory education. He accompanied his measures of improvement by measures of precaution. Foreseeing that the first contact of education with uncultivated minds would inevitably produce socialistic results, he passed laws for the repression of socialism almost simultaneously with his laws for general compulsory education. This stern-handed policy may not recommend itself in the least degree to Englishmen, but even if they dis-

approve such statecraft they must needs admire the foresight which it indicated. It is foreign to our traditions and to our sense of freedom to imitate the policy of Germany in this respect, but we are none the less forced to counteract by some means, less official but not less drastic, the very same dangers with which Germany has had to deal. We have to face the fact that the tree of education supplies the knowledge not only of good but of evil; we cannot in this country suppress the evil by legislation, unless the evil takes the form of actual crime; but we can endeavour to minimise it by increasing the influence of the good. There are many methods by which this end can be reached, methods which I need not touch on here; one of the most powerful is, without doubt, to be found in the influence of art. I am inclined to think that the systematic development of art is a lever in the hands of education which, if properly applied, will act more powerfully, if less slowly, than any measures of socialistic repression; by raising the standard of refinement it will in time counteract by fair means the dangers born of knowledge. For art in its very essence is unselfish. Its creations are the work of one man for the use of others. The finer the creations, the wider the influence they exert.

It is my privilege to plead the cause of that art which is perhaps the most wide-reaching of all, and if the most wide-reaching, then surely the most powerful for good. Of all the arts, it is the only one which may justly be said to be at its zenith of excellence in the present century. For, with all the brilliant sculptors and painters we possess, we cannot point in the last hundred years to the equal of Praxiteles

or Pheidias, of Raphael or Michael Angelo. Our architecture is but a *rechauffé* of the creations of the periods of the past. We have no distinct style of our own period which can be said to bear comparison with the masters of Greek and Gothic art, or even with the school of the Renaissance. But it can be asserted without fear of contradiction that in the century which saw the birth of the greatest works of Beethoven, music can bear away the palm as a living art at the very climax of its power and perfection. For while other arts have had their Decadence, and have even passed through their process of revivifying, music is still developing its natural vigorous existence, has not been moribund, and therefore requires no Renaissance. If I may take an instance, I might remind you how some of our most distinguished English painters have harked back for their means of expression to the art of four centuries ago. In music no such step has been taken, nor will it be taken so long as it can find natural means of expression in its own process of development. I apprehend, then, that in music you have at your disposal the most powerful living agency for the refinement of the masses, and it only remains to consider how it can best be brought into use. Certain societies have, as you doubtless know, been started for the purpose of enabling the poorer classes of the metropolis to hear the best music at a nominal cost, and sometimes even free of expense. This is one most important move. It rests with the schools to educate the children of this immense and most intelligent audience to a proper appreciation of such music, and to extend that appreciation, and so still

further increase that audience. The main point for us here to consider is how that end can be gained. I do not deny that much has been done, but I assert most positively that certain alterations and improvements are a matter of sheer necessity, if musical education is to be properly carried on. Vast sums of money are being expended in grants for musical education in this country, and the British taxpayer has a right to claim that those grants should be properly applied and should produce equivalent results. I am justified by statistics in putting the annual expenditure upon grants for singing by note in English schools in round numbers at £130,000, while £43,000 a year is spent upon the accomplishment known as 'singing by ear.' Now, I am perfectly aware that in order to induce schools to teach music at all, it must have been necessary to provide some stepping-stone to proper musical teaching; otherwise the move would in all probability have proved abortive at the very outset. For this purpose singing by ear was perhaps the only available medium. I am convinced, however, that the time has now come for discontinuing a grant for this purpose, and applying it to more useful objects. It is neither more nor less than a premium on bawling.[1] It is of no value to music, though it may be classed as a species of amusement; but we have not yet got a government which will subsidise games. If it is found useful in a school, it should be cultivated, but not as a serious study, and only as a means of securing the interest

[1] Separate grants for singing are no longer paid, but inasmuch as singing by note is part of the recognised curriculum of every elementary school, the point for which I contended in this lecture has been gained.

of children for singing by note. I doubt if a proposition to recite a piece of poetry without being able to read it would be thought worthy of a grant, but it would be highly absurd to have compulsory education and be content to allow a child to leave school knowing several poems by heart but unable to read them or write them. I ask the same for music. If you teach it, teach it thoroughly by note; and cease to give a premium for a smattering which is useless as well as superficial. The systems of note-teaching are many, but the rivalry between them is not so serious a matter for consideration. No system which teaches a child that a certain sign represents a certain sound, either absolutely or relatively, can in its essence be mischievous. What is mischievous is a haphazard training, and of all such haphazard methods 'singing by ear' is the most dangerous, unless it is rapidly corrected by the influence of singing by note. What I am pleading for is, then, the augmentation of the grant for singing by note, and the extinction of the grant for singing by ear. The fact that the grant for singing by note is now three times as much as that for singing by ear, proves that it has got the upper hand in the country. If the numbers were equal there might be some excuse for delay, but the large preponderance of the systematic teaching demands in itself a strengthening of its position. The transference of the music grant for singing by ear to that for singing by note would in itself be an additional inducement for developing that branch of study; while if teachers found it in any instance advisable to begin by ear-training alone, we should at all events have some security that such training

would only be used as a means to the end which we desire.

There are, of course, here, as in all reforms or improvements, some difficulties in the way. It is difficult to raise your building a story without interfering with some ancient lights. Your ancient lights are those masters of schools in more remote districts, who are not sufficiently trained in music themselves to teach it by note. This is no doubt a difficulty, but it is one which time will surmount. If a proper inducement to the study is held out, the teachers will gradually qualify themselves to take advantage of it. They will never do so as long as they get a grant for the easier and more haphazard method. But the taste for music in the country is increasing at so rapid a rate, that every year will increase the number of persons qualified to teach music by note. Supposing, then, that this transference of grant was carried out, there arises the question of its application. It might be applied in two ways: either by increasing the grant for any or all systems of training by note, or by preserving the present grant to modern systems of notation and reserving the extra allowance for proficiency in the old notation. Without taking any hard-and-fast line upon these alternatives, I feel that I ought to weigh as far as possible the pros and cons of them. Let me say at once that no one is more convinced than I am of the great value of and the great services rendered by the Tonic Sol-fa notation. It has without doubt simplified vocal music in a most marked way, and has cultivated to an extraordinary extent the power of singing intervals at sight

accurately and in tune. For school purposes and for vocal music it is simply invaluable. Moreover, it is of the greatest use to the many choral societies in country parts where all the singers are not conversant with the old notation. But, on the other hand, the great mass of instrumental music and of modern classical works are a sealed book to those who are exclusively trained in letter notation. I am well aware that one of the greatest difficulties which musicians felt with regard to the Tonic Sol-fa system is being removed, namely, the finding of some means whereby the reading of the old notation can be led up to by Tonic Sol-fa training, without a recommencement of the entire study. To encourage this development seems to me to be the sound and obvious policy. Neglect of the sense of absolute pitch as distinct from relative pitch—in other words, the sense that a certain sound represents a certain fixed note—is the greatest sacrifice which musicians have had to make in approving the system of the movable *Do*. No one who is not experienced in musical training can be expected to appreciate the immense value of the sense of absolute pitch.[1] I must ask you to take it on trust. In supporting as I do most cordially the Tonic Sol-fa system, I am aware at the same time of what I am sacrificing. It is worthy of consideration whether the teaching of the old notation might not be a higher optional step to which this extra grant might be applied, without penalising in the smallest degree the present systems. We should then reap the full advantage of both: we should, on the one hand, gain the relative pitch

[1] *E.g.* it is invaluable to an operatic singer.

without ignoring the absolute, in the higher classes; and we should be enlarging the range of musical literature within the reach of the higher scholars. I conceive it to be of the highest importance for the cultivation of music in this country that the bridge between the Tonic Sol-fa and the old notation systems should be made as practical and as easy as it is possible to make it, and that every inducement should be held out for proper mastery of both. At the same time, I thankfully admit that a scholar who leaves school with a knowledge of the Tonic Sol-fa system only, has mastered quite enough to be useful and even ornamental, and quite enough to justify the grant which he is instrumental in securing. So much can certainly not be said of singing by ear.

Having so far discussed the desirable reforms in the matter of how to sing, I wish to go a step further, and suggest some quite as important considerations in the matter of what to sing. Here I confess I am somewhat amazed that more definite care has not been exercised by those in authority. As far as I am aware, very careful consideration and supervision is exercised as to the quality and nature of the prose and poetry which is placed before the children in our schools. But with regard to the quality of the music there must be very little of such supervision, and that of a very perfunctory nature. It is rather assumed, I imagine (if I am wrong I am open to correction), that the inspectors of schools are a safeguard in such a matter; and, in the matter of general education, they undoubtedly are. But surely you are expecting too much from a body even of such able men as the inspectors of schools, if you trust

to them for a sufficient knowledge of and taste for music to enable them to be equally sure in their judgment on that as on other general branches of education. Many of them, no doubt, happen by accident rather than design to know a good deal about music. But it is not to be in justice expected of them that they should be sufficient masters of the craft to regulate this important study. They can and do see that the words sung will pass muster; they cannot be so sure of the music to which those words are sung. I would impress upon you the vast importance of allowing no music to be sung in the schools which has not been approved by some responsible body of musicians, and duly authorised upon their responsibility and advice by the School Board. It should be made as impossible for the children to be taught bad music as bad books. And unless they are taught good music, it would be far better to omit the study altogether. I venture on this head to throw out a suggestion for your consideration. Our two leading institutions for the cultivation of music, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, have just combined for the purposes of conducting local examinations in various centres of the British Isles. For the purpose of carrying on this organisation, a board consisting of the most responsible musicians connected with both institutions has been formed, of which H.R.H. the Prince of Wales is President. If such a board as this were to undertake the supervision of a series of systematic school music-books, there could practically be no doubt of their genuine value. Against this idea it may be asserted that you have an inspector for music already,

who might fairly be expected to supervise such books. But it is only right to remember that such a responsibility is a heavy one indeed for any one man to bear, however great his ability; and what is much more serious, the rejection of many worthless books would be attended necessarily by much ill-feeling and even odium, the burden of which should not in justice be placed on the shoulders of any single individual.

And what should be the kind of music taught? Without doubt, national music, folk-music—the music which from the earliest times has grown up amongst the people.[1] Without the foundation of such music no healthy taste can be fostered in the population. From all times it has been the germ from which great composers have come. Need I point out to you as a proof, that those countries which have the greatest store of national music have also produced the greatest amount of creative genius as well as of general appreciative power? Compare for a moment Germany and Italy, with their vast treasures of folk-music, and their grand list of masters of composition, with, for instance, a new country like America. In the former countries the nationality has become so rooted and individualised that national music has had sure ground to grow upon. In the latter you have a mixed collection of all nationalities which is only in process of formation into an individual whole. The characteristics of a nation, it is true, are forming there with remarkable rapidity, but there has not yet been time for the national music to grow. They, therefore, as yet, have not produced their Bach or Beethoven.

Folk-music is not easy to define. It grows in a

[1] This point has also been gained.

country; it can only in a few instances claim a distinct composer, and then usually a name unknown, obscure, or forgotten. In Hungary, where it is still in process of lively production, a tune is literally put together by passing from mouth to mouth, beginning with some simple phrase and developing to some complete song. Of such a character was a most stirring march-tune, which developed itself in the ranks of the Hungarians when they occupied Bosnia after the Treaty of Berlin. This tune owned to no particular author; it grew. Any of you who have heard a chant of sailors heaving up anchor would perhaps be surprised if you knew that such a thing as this is folk-music in its simplest form. In some countries this process of development of folk-music is in greater activity than others. In Hungary it is at fever-heat still. In Russia it is not far behind. Even in England it is not totally extinct, although it is not rapidly produced. Still songs occasionally appear which, although of lowly and even vulgar origin, possess a certain English stamp, and may, after the refining processes of time have done their work, be included in some collection of national music a century or two hence. I should probably horrify you by instancing the notorious tune of 'We don't want to fight' as just such a song;[1] it contains some vulgar phrases and illustrates what to some may be objectionable sentiments, but in spite of that it has

[1] It has always seemed to me an odd misnomer to extract the term 'Jingo' from the words of this ditty, and to make it signify 'a fighter at any price.' The sentiment is quite healthy: 'We are not desirous of fighting, but if we are obliged to fight, we will take care to utilise our means to do it well.' In the sense of the words, every Englishman, irrespective of party, ought to be a 'Jingo.'

a true British ring about it. It would not be the first folk-song which has begun by being the organ of a political party, and ended by meeting with a general acceptance quite independent of its associations. I am not recommending it for immediate use in the schools; we can leave that to the judgment of the next century.

But if you will admit my proposition that the healthy musical taste of a nation depends upon the wealth of its literature of folk-music, I will, as a result of your admission, point out that in the British Isles you have the greatest and most varied storehouse of national music in existence. You have two distinct schools—Saxon and Celtic; and four distinct styles—English, Welsh, Scotch, and Irish. The English, strong, solid, and straightforward; the Welsh, full of dash and 'go'; the Scotch, a mixture of the humorous and the poetic, full of strongly marked rhythms, dry and caustic at times, full of a quality which I can best term 'lilt'; the Irish, which to my mind, speaking as impartially as an Irishman can, is the most remarkable literature of folk-music in the world,—there is no emotion with which it does not deal successfully, and none has more power of pathos or of fire.

With such literature as this at your disposal, there surely need be no lack of ground-work for teaching music in your schools; but these old bulwarks of your national art must be made the basis of your teaching.

I should also suggest, with a view to developing the interest as well as the natural tastes of the children of various nationalities and proclivities with

which you have to deal, that the music chosen for them should be at first that which comes most home to them; that you should in England start with English folk-music, in Wales with Welsh, in Ireland with Irish, and in Scotland with Scotch; and, to still further subdivide matters, that sea-songs should be cultivated in the maritime districts, and so on. But not exclusively in any one. After a course of education in the music indigenous to each race, a course in that of their neighbours and compatriots should follow. And here it would be important to select the order in which the stranger folk-music should be presented to each section. I am of opinion that it should be laid before them in the strongest contrast possible. My scheme would be this—

For English Schools.

1. English National Folk-music.
2. Irish „ „
3. Welsh „ „
4. Scotch „ „

For Welsh Schools.

1. Welsh National Folk-music.
2. Scotch „ „
3. English „ „
4. Irish „ „

For Irish Schools.

1. Irish National Folk-music.
2. English „ „
3. Welsh „ „
4. Scotch „ „

For Scotch Schools.

1. Scotch National Folk-music.
2. Welsh „ „
3. English „ „
4. Irish „ „

It is by strong contrast that the interest of children is most surely enlisted. It is, therefore, doubly fortunate for British schools that, without going outside their native productions, they can secure such contrasted styles as those I have enumerated. Much also depends on the manner of their presentation to the pupils. They should, for the sake of the preservation of the old melodies in their purest form, be most carefully edited, and such accompaniments as are thought advisable should be added in the best taste. Of such tunes the schools would be in fact the preservers, for it stands to reason that what a child has learnt as part of his daily education will grow up with him in the form in which he imbibed it at school. A careless misreading or unnecessary alteration may be the means in the future of the destruction of the beauty of an old melody. To deal with this, you want wise heads and cultivated brains. It will be no easy matter to purify some national music from excrescences which have appeared in it in later and more careless times. In the case of so patriotic and so enthusiastic a national music lover as Thomas Moore, it is scarcely possible to find a page of Irish folk-music which he touched without unjustifiable and, I must say, destructive alteration. In English music and in Scotch we are more fortunate. Mr. William Chappell and the late Sir George Macfarren did much to preserve its purity from the additions of Vandalism. For the pure melodies of Ireland we have to trust to such lesser-known antiquarians as Petrie and Bunting, the former of whom published a volume of vast importance, which is now only obtainable by sheer luck.[1] In Scotch music we shall

[1] The whole of Petrie's collection is now (1908) in print.

be safe, thanks to our possession of a man of such purity of taste and mastery of the subject as the Principal of the Academy of Music, Dr. Mackenzie.[1] In this, as, alas, in other matters, my nation is the most distressful, and has suffered most from careless and unscrupulous mutilation of her national music.[2] Moreover, she cannot lay this to the charge of the Sassenach, inasmuch as her own sons are the chief offenders.

Such a work as this supervision of national music for our schools involves, ought surely to be placed in the hands of our responsible leading musical men, and no collection should be issued until their approval of it has been obtained. Moreover, it is necessary, as part of such a systematic reform, that no books whatever should be used except those approved by such a board of authorities as I have indicated, and any extra songs should be introduced only after the national music had been thoroughly taught as the artistic daily bread. As soon as these collections have taken root firmly, then, and then only, should be considered the advisability of a further addition—the best songs of other countries. But it would be hard to gauge the mischief which might be done if

[1] Now Sir Alexander Mackenzie.

[2] In spite of the correct and verified versions of Moore's melodies being now published and easily obtainable, collections for Irish schools are still issued in Ireland with the old errors and misreadings unaltered; thus perpetuating them for succeeding generations, and obliterating the characteristic colour of the Irish scales or modes. Moore was but a superficial amateur in music, though a charming singer. He left the musical part to Sir John Stevenson, whose taste was for Haydn rather than for folk-song. He added accidentals right and left to bring the scales into line with his own limited experience: a proceeding which Petrie (who had a far truer archæological and artistic sense) combated mightily, but his voice was as one crying in the wilderness.

such a move were made too soon. Exotics have always a fascination about them which it is hard to resist, and you must train your children to appreciate daisies before you present them with orchids. Moreover, this fascination may result in their thinking the home-growths tame, and we all know that familiarity even in folk-music may breed contempt. If I may once more take the example of my own country, Ireland, it is a sad fact that Christy Minstrel songs are driving the superb Irish folk-music out of sight and out of mind. In the neighbourhood of the towns the 'darkie' invasion has been fearfully successful. It is now only in the harvest-field, and in remote districts where the melodies sacred to burnt cork are still an unknown luxury, that the genuine ring of the Irish style is preserved. Such disaster as this it is for the schools to avert. I do not deny that the results will want time for their development. But that is no reason for the delay of reform. I would impress upon you that, in distributing musical education among the masses, you are not only doing general good and mitigating evil by the powers of refinement, you are also incurring great responsibilities. Amongst your thousands of scholars, you may be entertaining angels unawares. For all you or I can tell, the genius of a Mozart or a Beethoven may be latent in some child whose taste you are the first to cultivate. Take care that you give such a one the chance of being grounded and developed in the right way. Some small insignificant plant which you are rearing may blossom and bear fruit out of all proportion to your expectations, and even become a possession for his country to boast of.

Great men have mostly had the foundations of their greatness laid in the nursery and the schoolroom. It rests in your hands to have a care that this early training is, in matters of art as well as of general education, of the best kind in itself and carried on upon the soundest lines. The greatest composers have sprung from the heart of the people; it is with the heart of the people that you have to deal, and it is for you to give the opportunities for their development. If you only rear the taste and start the training of one great composer in a century, he will be worth waiting for, and will repay all the pains and trouble and cost of the machinery of production. With well-laid principles you may not have a century to wait.

MUSIC IN CATHEDRAL AND CHURCH CHOIRS

(A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CHURCH CONGRESS IN LONDON IN 1899)

THE Church is in a unique position as regards music. Music is, of all the arts, the one which is in the closest daily relationship with her. She is not dependent upon it for monetary profit, and, therefore, has a free hand in advancing what is best without regard to what will pay; a consideration which, in the circles of music itself, is unfortunately at all times a pressing problem. I take it that no one will deny that amongst the many duties of the Church, education, refinement, and improvement in matters of taste are not, or should not be, absent, and, therefore, I hold that in respect of music, it is not only possible, but imperative, that the Church should educate, refine, and improve its members in that particular branch of it which is especially devoted to herself. She should lead taste, and not follow it. She should uncompromisingly adopt what is best, irrespective of popularity, and eschew the second-rate, even if it is momentarily attractive. I am thus brought face to face with the question whether the Church, through her cathedrals and in 'choirs and places where they sing,' is doing her duty in this respect: and study of her recent

musical records obliges me to answer the question with a decided negative.

Cathedral music in England has a great history. We have to thank the cathedrals for keeping alive, in artistically dark times, much of the half-buried talent of this country. They were the nurseries of such men as Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Farrant, and, greatest of all, of Henry Purcell. The traditions of these men, and many more, are not lightly to be brushed aside. They represented not merely learning, but luminous fancy; their works were English to the backbone, solid in foundation; sometimes, perhaps, severe to a new acquaintance, but, once understood, always growing in sympathetic feeling, and constant in the affection they inspired. They have an atmosphere about them which affects every man who, from his childhood, has known an English cathedral. In this respect they occupy the same position in the English Church that Heinrich Schütz and the Bachs did in the Lutheran, and Palestrina and his contemporaries in the Roman.

At the present time, in the Roman Church, we find all the signs pointing in the direction of the renaissance of Palestrina and his school in connection with its services, and a general feeling to encourage the writing of sacred music on their lines. In the Lutheran Church the influence of Bach has never been superseded; it is as great now as ever it was, and even growing in influence. In the English alone do we find our own great masters being more and more systematically neglected, and a new conglomerate style introduced in their place. Talent, indeed, is not absent; it could scarcely be so in an age

when music has made such strides in this country. There is plenty of good work to be found both among the elders and youngsters of these times; but, as in everything else, the best work is the rarest and the most difficult to sift from a mass of mediocrity, much of which is not even grammatically written, much of which is veneered, tinselly, empty of idea, and some simply imported from sources, foreign in more senses than one, foreign to our buildings, to our services, and to our tastes. And this retrograde movement is of comparatively recent date. In the time of Samuel Wesley it was not so; his son, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, though he had a touch of the reformer in him, never led or hinted at revolution. Thomas Attwood Walmisley, one of the most gifted of our Church composers, never left the paths of the genuine school; Sterndale Bennett, though owing so much to German training and influence, never ceased to belong to the British school in his Church music, and had the deepest contempt for the undignified work of which he lived long enough to see the beginnings. If he had studied the recent records of our cathedral choirs, he would probably have despaired of the republic.

For the rapidly increasing elimination of the works of our old masters from the lists means the destruction of all history and tradition, and the undermining of taste. While other countries are not only preserving their great works, but by research adding those which have dropped out or been forgotten to their stores, we are locking up and forgetting volumes of treasures, and retaining for use only a few of the most obvious and best known. I will give you a very few of the

most glaring instances, which I have obtained from a record of the music given in fifty-one of our cathedrals and collegiate churches. Purcell's 'Evening Service' in G Minor, one of the very finest works we possess, appears only in eight lists; on the other hand, a modern service of wonderful vapidity, which shall be nameless, appears in thirty-four. Gibbons' magnificent anthem, 'O Thou, the central orb,' appears only in three; S. S. Wesley's finest work, 'Let us lift up our hearts,' in four; Walmisley's best anthem, 'If the Lord Himself,' in ten; while a vulgar modern anthem of foreign origin is given in thirty-one places. I have observed also the relative value given to foreign composers. Palestrina receives but forty performances of seventeen works, and is recognised only in eighteen cathedrals; Sebastian Bach, the greatest of all, and the most in sympathy with our tastes and traditions, received but ninety-nine performances in twenty-six cathedrals of his innumerable masterpieces. While, on the other hand, a modern foreign composer, alien to our style, and representing all that is most empty, showy, and superficial in religious music, gets two hundred and thirty-one performances of thirty-three anthems in no less than forty-four of our cathedrals. The net result of the record I have studied shows that the proportion of works given is five modern to one ancient. A lamentable history this. As well might we bring up the children of our age upon three-volume novels, providing them with five sensational books for every one of serious or solid value.

What is the cause of this condition of affairs? Partly, perhaps, a lack of veneration for our traditions, which is not lacking also in other directions at the

end of this nineteenth century. Partly the fact that music has become so popular, and has been studied so much more widely in recent years, that the supply has not been limited to the works of those who have something to say and know how to say it; and many ambitious pens, who have not attained to sufficient mastery to be able to write a movement in form, have been led to attempt the shorter, more scrappy, and (apparently) more easy method of setting the canticles or writing a short anthem.

But the real root of the mischief is, I am convinced, the trammelled position of the man who is responsible for the performance of the music, and who is, perhaps, in many cathedral bodies the only representative of thoroughly trained knowledge of the subject—the organist. In most cases the responsibility for the choice of music is not centred in him, the expert, but either altogether in the hands of one of the clergy, or divided between a precentor and the organist. There are, of course, instances where this disastrous policy does not hold, and very striking instances too; but they are unfortunately exceptions, not rules. Division of responsibility, or the assignment of it to the non-expert is alike, to my mind, a fatal mistake. Like most other matters of a like nature, this custom is a survival of ancient times, when the conditions were wholly different. Formerly the monk was a more learned and cultivated musician than his servant, the organist or choir-trainer. He therefore rightly dictated the choice of music, of which he was a master. The positions are now reversed. The organist is the learned and cultivated musician, and the clerical official has not (save in a very few

instances) qualified either by study or research for a task demanding exceptional musical skill and routine. But he retains a power for which he has in the lapse of time lost the necessary equipment, and the result is a far-spread amateurishness of taste, which if it is permitted to rule, will inevitably destroy the best traditions of English Church music. Moreover, the organist, aware beforehand that he will have little or no control over the music to be given, is thus discouraged from studying seriously the history and literature, as well as the technique of his branch of the art. What would be said if an organist claimed control over the subjects and tendencies of the sermons to be delivered by the clergy? The suggestion seems ridiculous, but it is not one whit more so than the condition of affairs which I have described.

I am not speaking of those matters merely from hearsay, but also from personal experience. I was for many years an organist. I venture, therefore, to recount, as shortly as possible, my own experiences. When I entered upon my duties, I found that the choice of all the music was made by the precentor. To this choice I was expected to sign my name with his. But when I found that I had practically no voice either in insertion or elimination, I declined to append my name to a list of music with the selection of which I had nothing to do. For many years, although the university to which I had the honour to belong had thought me worthy in knowledge and experience of being elected to their Professorship of Music, in my own College Chapel I was absolutely powerless to control or direct the choice of works

which were to influence the tastes of hundreds of students. Surely such a policy is mischievous. Needless to say that the result of it was that many generations of young Englishmen left their college without knowing the greatest and best of the works of the English Cathedral School; works which, even when I was a youth, were the daily bread of all who went to a choral service. I have heard Purcell termed dull, Gibbons dry, and known their finest anthems obliterated from the lists after one hearing, because they were not (to use the ready terms of the day) sufficiently 'bright and attractive': terms for which I venture to substitute 'superficial and hysterical.'

If, then, such conditions as these are to prevail much longer in our cathedral and church choirs, we may say good-bye to the great store of noble music which our musical forefathers have bequeathed to us. We shall find put in its place flimsy and ephemeral trivialities, which have just enough sensationalism in them to tickle the musical palate; we shall find music, much of it excellent in its proper place, but written for totally different conditions in other countries, imported into our services, destroying their character, and altering the whole taste of the community; a taste which it has taken seven centuries to build up in this country. Take, for instance, the adaptation of the Masses of Haydn, Mozart, or Schubert to the English Communion Service. No one admires them more than I do, but what treatment has to be meted out to them? A Mass, as written for the Roman ritual, is a thought-out and balanced piece of work, not merely scraps of move-

ments, which may be played in any order, but as homogeneous as any sonata or symphony. What would be thought if a conductor, in order to present the Eroica Symphony of Beethoven to an English audience, cut out three-fourths of the first movement, and played the second movement at the end as a Finale? Yet this is what is done with any adapted Mass in our English services. The Kyrie (for which there is no place) is cut down and mutilated for words to which it only very partially applies, and the Gloria, written to follow immediately after the Kyrie, is perforce removed from its place, and sung at the end of a work which was designed to finish with the Dona nobis pacem. This vandalism is being perpetrated somewhere every Sunday, and the finest designs of the great foreign masters are mutilated after the most drastic and Procrustean methods. If the old English masters are to be disestablished, at any rate let their place be taken by works appropriate for the purpose, and not by the distortion of masterpieces which were written for other purposes. The advice I would venture to give is best expressed in the words of two great composers of this century. As Wagner says in the *Meistersinger*, '*Ehrt eure deutschen Meister*,' so let me adapt it, 'Honour your English Masters'; and as Verdi said not long ago, '*Torniamo all' antico*,' make the mainstay of your music the great works of the past, without ceasing to encourage and include all that is best and most genuine in contemporary music. And leave the control of the choice of music to the man whose life-work it is to study and understand it, the man whom you put in command of your organ and your choir. Pick

the best artist you can, and when you have put him in the post, leave him alone; and if he abuses his trust, turn him out. But stop this hopeless method of either dividing responsibility or placing it in the hands of the inexperienced amateur.

SOME ASPECTS OF MUSICAL CRITICISM IN ENGLAND

(1894)

The late Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Dr. Thompson, famous for his power of two-edged satire, on one rare occasion was induced to occupy the pulpit in St. Mary's Church, and to preach the University sermon. A large congregation was attracted by the unusual announcement, and the seats of the theological professors were exceptionally well filled. The text given out by the Master was 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church,' delivered with great emphasis, and with that clearness of utterance which was one of his many and rare gifts. In the pause which ensued, all the divinity professors were seen to become very much on the alert, and to watch with bated breath for a *pronunciamiento* on this hotly debated subject. In the very first sentence of the sermon, the preacher doomed them to disappointment. 'Some of my hearers,' he said, 'may expect me to enter upon the controversial questions involved in my text, but I have no intention of doing so.' Whereat the professors composed themselves, with ill-concealed chagrin, to listen to an oration on some wholly pacific problems, and the Master had scored his little point. I can imagine that the spectacle of one belonging to the ranks of the criticised daring,

apparently, to rush into criticism of his critics will cause many of them to turn to this article expecting to find all the vials of an artist's supposed wrath poured out at last, and their contents placed at their disposal for further criticism. But, like the Master of Trinity, I am afraid I shall disappoint them; for, in the first place, artists are not always in antagonism to their critics, even when those critics are severe; and, in the second place, it is as much to the interest of the artist as of the critic that the position of criticism in the world of letters should be as high and as independent as it can possibly be made. I am not going to criticise the critics, but I am going, as much in their interest as in the interest of the art of music, to criticise the conditions under which they are compelled to write; and I do so, not without hope that my suggestions will so far meet with the approval and support of the literary wing of the musical army that something practical may result from them.

There are two baneful oppressions under which musical criticism in England is now groaning. The first and the most serious is the feverish haste with which editors of newspapers insist upon the production of critical notices. In all, or nearly all, the daily papers the musical correspondent is expected to produce an article on a concert or an operatic performance within two hours of its close, which shall be printed by cock-crow the next morning. What can be more unreasonable, more destructive of cool judgment, and even of good temper, than such tyranny as this? No time is left for consideration, no chance allowed for the study of a new work, no encouragement offered to literary style. A new opera which

has been, perhaps, the work of years, and the outcome of the daily thought and protracted labour of composer and librettist, is produced on a Monday night, the curtain falls about midnight, and by 2 A.M. on Tuesday morning a critic, who has just made his first acquaintance with the composition, is expected to have completed a full and just chronicle of its merits and its faults, its workmanship and its effect, fit to be put into print, and intended to instruct the public before breakfast as to what attitude they should be prepared to take when they find themselves in the audience. I say, as one who is, from much experience in the musician's craft, perhaps exceptionally quick in seizing the points of a new work at the first hearing, that to expect the best possible criticism, or indeed criticism of any lasting value at all, under such circumstances, is grotesque, and the insistence upon such hot-haste production is a hardship to the writer, an injury to the producer, and a mischief to music. History shows abundantly that no criticism has survived the test of time unless it has been endowed with the vivifying force of literary style. Indeed, this quality has gone far towards preserving essays which in many points are wholly at variance with the views of the present day. Burney, prejudiced as he was, is a standing proof of the power which can be wielded by a critic of earnest thought and well-balanced pen, and he was thought worthy of being admitted as a member of the same round-table with the literary kings of his time. Not so long ago we possessed a critic who was also endowed with a style which has preserved his writings and kept them interesting even for those who wholly disagreed with his musical opinions—H. F. Chorley. But he

had the good fortune to write for a newspaper which appeared but once a week. His articles could never have carried the weight which they undoubtedly did carry if they had been composed in less than two hours after the performances which they chronicled. Apart from the interest which attaches to the criticisms of Schumann and Berlioz as being the manifestation of the literary qualities of two great composers, it may safely be conjectured that unless they had had time to think about what they had to say, we should not have been the richer by their admirable articles.[1]

What then is the remedy for this condition of things? That we in England should cease to be the only country in Europe where a criticism is expected within six hours of a performance, and thus assimilate our procedure to that of all other civilised European countries. In other words, that in place of hurried paragraphs scattered here and there in the newspaper, generally hard to find, and usually buried in the most incongruous surroundings, editors should adopt the principle of special articles, after the manner of the *feuilletons* in French papers, though not necessarily printed in a divided page, published if possible upon some definite day, criticising performances which have taken place a reasonable time beforehand, and not so cramped for room that electric-telegraph English is

[1] A singular instance of the danger of hastily recorded impressions occurred when the late Dr. Hueffer was musical critic of the *Times*. He wrote a severe notice of an important work by Brahms, when it was produced at a Philharmonic Concert. At the following concert it was repeated, and Dr. Hueffer having changed his opinion after hearing it a second time, had the rare courage to disown publicly his first judgment of the composition.

forced to take the place of literary finish. By this means the public will be better informed, because they will read with greater interest; composers will have a chance of making or marring themselves with their audiences unprejudiced favourably or the reverse; and the criticism, when it appears, will be a more certain chronicle of the fate of a composition, as well as of its intrinsic worth; while the writer will not be driven to unwholesome hours and hard labour on an article to be done against time, and probably when finished, to be 'crowded out' of the date for which it was intended, and to appear cold and flabby when the feverish interest of the first day is over.

When Verdi's *Falstaff* was produced in Paris last month, I watched with interest the method in which it would be dealt with by the *Journal des Débats*, a typical Parisian daily paper of the best order, of which Reyer, the composer of *Sigurd*, is the musical correspondent (a post formerly held by Berlioz). The procedure was this: a brief chronicle of the fact of the performance having taken place, and a rough indication of its reception appeared in the paper of the next evening. But it was not until four days after the *première*, when the public had had already three opportunities of hearing the new opera, that an article from Reyer's pen appeared; and its purity of style and loftiness of thought showed in a moment that it was the work of days and not of minutes. In a word, the critic's share of the task was carried out in a manner worthy of the composer's. Is it too much to hope that such wise counsels may yet prevail in our editorial offices? I feel convinced that such a reform would be welcomed by the critics themselves, and

equally so that if a determined stand in its favour were made by them, artists and public alike would give them the strongest moral support.

We have already weekly newspapers to which such a reform need not apply, and it is significant that in libraries of reference the newspapers which are most frequently bound and preserved are the weekly and not the daily papers; obviously because the contents are more valuable and better digested. It may be urged that daily papers are only meant for ephemeral consumption. That may be true of reports of passing events, but it would be a pity to reduce the critical side of a newspaper's duties to the level of a mere record of facts, and this is no argument against making that portion of the contents more valuable and placing them on a more worthy footing. Unless this is done, no encouragement is given to finish or depth in any department; and musical criticism is, of all the branches, the worst treated in these respects. In view of the great renaissance of music in England which is becoming every day more marked, it is incumbent upon those responsible for the management of the daily newspapers to place musical criticism in a position worthy of the art with which it deals. To do so will be to ensure greater self-respect both in critics and criticised, and, as a result, better feeling between them. In some few of our daily papers a column is devoted once a week to musical news and gossip. This seems to be exactly the reverse of what the procedure should be. Such an article should be reserved for the criticisms of new works produced, and of the concerts and operatic performances which have been given, and the gossip and general news can

appear (as in the case of French papers) in smaller quantities day by day. This would relieve the writers of harassing and unhealthy night work, and keep them fresh for their more important labours. More latitude might then be given them as to the choice of concerts which they deem worthy of notice in an important article.

There remains, indeed, one danger from such a policy : namely, that editors, who happen themselves to be ignorant of music, should engage the services of writers almost equally ignorant merely because they possess the gift of literary style. It is well known how serious are the errors into which some of the best English authors, even those who have had a love for music and a smattering of its terminology, have fallen, when they have attempted to describe matters intimately connected with the art. Where the greater have stumbled, the lesser may be pardoned for falling. But editors are as a rule men of experience and sense, and the majority of them at least may be trusted, if they are themselves without any acquaintance with music, to make sure of the credentials of those whom they wish to appoint as their musical correspondents. If they appoint an incompetent person, public opinion is pretty sure, sooner or later, to find out and expose the ignoramus.

So much for the first of the two difficulties which are oppressing us. The second is one more delicate to handle and requiring more diplomacy to allude to than I fear I possess. But I approach it with the assurance that my remarks will be taken in good part, even if they are not wholly to the taste of my readers. There has of late grown up in England the fashion of

one critic speaking through the mouths of several newspapers. The reason for this is not far to seek. The very existence of such an evil proves that the profession of musical reporting is not sufficiently lucrative to admit of a man devoting his pen to any one publication. For it is not possible that any critic who had his heart in his work would care to deliver himself, except on the rarest of occasions, of more than one well-digested opinion. Great creations will always, no doubt, suggest many different trains of thought to the hearer, and incline him to express his views in as many different essays; but the ordinary concert or opera performance can scarcely suggest more than one comment, and its reduplication can, therefore, only mean the same opinion expressed in different language. This is in itself a reproach to the management of newspapers, and only another proof that this department of journalism is not being treated in a manner commensurate with its importance. But I need scarcely insist on the proposition that it is distinctly unfair and unjust that the public should read some five or six different notices written in five or six different forms, and imagine them to be the independent work of five or six different brains and judgments, while they all really emanate from one pen. Moreover, the practice is a most dangerous one, for such a critic, however honest, may at times nod, and if he perchance take an unduly favourable or unfavourable view, its effect is multiplied five or six times, instead of standing as it should on its merits once expressed. It was unfortunate enough (for the writer) that Chorley condemned such a masterpiece as Schumann's Pianoforte Concerto; but

at least he only condemned it in the one paper for which he was known to be responsible. If he had done so in five or six other papers as well, the damage both to himself and to the public taste would have been incalculably greater and more lasting. To the critic such a plurality of power would have been a dangerous possession, and to the composer and to the public a most unjust infliction. In the present condition of finance it is not possible to expect a radical reform in this matter; and the evil is so deeply-seated that it is difficult to suggest a remedy which will redress the balance of justice without inflicting a fine upon the writers. The only method appears to me to be the adoption of signed articles instead of anonymous paragraphs; signed, that is, either by the name of the writer, after the fashion of our neighbours the French, or by a fixed *nom-de-guerre* or initials which shall appear at the foot of every article he writes. It is well known and admitted that anonymous articles carry a weight wholly out of proportion to the pen that writes them. In matters political it is perhaps advisable that such anonymity should be preserved. In matters artistic I feel that it would be far more satisfactory and wholesome if the articles were signed, for they are after all but the opinion of a single person, who should be able to show by his name what ballast he carries, and by what measure his opinions should be weighed. The procedure would then, at any rate, be straightforward, and it would be possible for the public, if they take the trouble, to identify the various articles. The result will not be so satisfactory as a policy of 'one paper, one critic,' but it will not, at any rate,

mislead the reader into the impression that the six reports are the outcome of six brains.

Such are the suggestions that I have to offer for the amelioration of the position in which musical criticism now finds itself. The importance of its existence it is possible to overrate as well as to underrate. But it is healthy when well employed, and necessary when ably done. It is as true that no adverse criticism ever does more than delay a success which is deserved, as that no favourable one can immortalise a work which is not worthy of life. But the brake and the spur alike are, if not necessities, at any rate excellent additions to the resources of civilisation; and if applied with judgment and experience, can only be useful. These, with the whip, are the possessions of criticism. The better and the more secure the seat we give to the critic, the greater the possibility that his means of propelling the public will be well and worthily used; and if the anomalies to which I have referred can be removed, no one, save perhaps the critics themselves, will be more reassured than the artists with whom it is their duty to deal faithfully and well.

THE ETHICS OF MUSIC-PUBLISHING IN ENGLAND

(1907)

THE questions which have been recently raised concerning the trend of musical publications in this country have aroused more than a passing interest in lovers of the art. They undoubtedly call for consideration, and well-weighed consideration may sooner or later result in an amelioration of the present conditions. At the present time England alone of all the important nations gives, as far as her publishers are concerned, little or no encouragement to native absolute music of a serious type. Choral music meets with a better fate, mainly owing to the number and activity of local societies for its cultivation, and to the requirements of our cathedrals and churches. But in the case of absolute music, a term which may be taken to cover orchestral and chamber work, pianoforte pieces and songs of a classical type, the few exceptions which exist only go to prove the rule, a consensus of neglect. This is obvious to any one who turns over the pages of our publishers' catalogues. The broad result is of course that Europe cannot appreciate what it cannot see, and that all it does see is a plethora of ephemeral ballads, of which the words and music generally vie with each other in inferiority of taste, workmanship, and invention,

and a pile of so-called musical comedies, mostly worthless from every artistic standpoint, not as frankly vulgar as the music of the old Strand Theatre burlesques, but veneered with a respectability too thin to conceal their close relationship to them. With such a musical literature as this alone on view we cannot wonder or complain if we are dubbed an unmusical country.

The outcry against the pirates was in itself a confirmation of the reliance placed upon this class of work by our publishing firms. The pirate, except in rare instances, sedulously avoided good music, and in Germany or France his field of operations would have been too limited to cause financial anxiety to any of their leading firms. His very success here was an eloquent comment upon the nature of the wares which form the mainstay of some of our largest houses. The devil's advocate has, however, a fair case to argue, and it may be as well to set out some of his more obvious points, be they ever so vulnerable. He will say that a publisher is only bound to bring out what will pay, and that for serious absolute music there is no appreciable market; that only a percentage of what he does bring out proves successful; and that it is a mistake to suppose that he exists for art's sake. All these contentions are highly plausible, but I doubt if, when they are examined, they will convince. The answer to one and all of them is that it is the isolation and insularity of the British publisher which brings about this dilemma. The crux of the situation is his ability and willingness to extend his business beyond the frontiers of England itself. So far he has made no effort to look upon all

Europe as his market, and confines himself to his own country. Why does he not take a leaf out of the book of those enterprising foreign firms (such as Breitkopf and Schott), who have branches not only here but in other countries outside Germany? If the production of serious high-class music does not pay in England, it seems to the ordinary man of business odd, to say the least, that these and other foreign firms who rely mainly upon such music should find it worth their while to keep up large establishments in England for its sale. There must be some public support to account for their policy. If English publications had a field as large, and competed on equal terms as to price and style with those of foreign production on their own ground, the result might very well be as successful for this country as for any other. But it is obvious that with a market restricted to one country, and that their own, they cannot hope to compete or to succeed.

If a music-publisher claims that he is only bound to bring out what will pay, it may fairly be asked what his definition of a paying profit is. We must know whether he regards the money spent on production as capital, and the money he receives from sales as interest and sinking fund (thereby conforming to the business principles of other trades), or whether he refuses to consider the money received from sales as in any way profitable until the whole of the capital expended upon production is refunded—in other words, claiming that any work is a loss until it has brought in 100 per cent. If he relies on the latter alternative he is setting up a law unto himself to which other trades do not conform. Most of us when we invest

£100 in a commercial venture would not complain, but rather rejoice, if we received £10 per annum on its working. None of us would assert that our investment was a loss while twenty years' interest and sinking fund was in process of repaying us our capital. The term 'loss' would only apply in the event of the liquidation of the company. Similarly the commercial value of a musical work depends upon its life as a going concern, and therefore upon the sum which the publishing right would fetch in the open market. Some songs no doubt pay hundreds per cent. in a year, as do some of the shares quoted upon the Stock Exchange; but, like them, the fluctuations of such properties are only too apt to be violent, their chances of speedy extinction much greater, and their value to trustees *nil*. The existence of these meteoric ventures does not shake the confidence of investors in sound 3 and 4 per cent. securities. If then the music-publishers look upon investments in good, and therefore, presumably, long-lived work paying a low rate of interest as a dead loss of capital, they are not in line with the general principles of high finance. That only a percentage of those works which are brought out proves remunerative is no doubt true. But as the bulk of them are ballads, which are published at an almost nominal cost, the risk is very small, and the results of even one success in that branch is more than enough to pay for forty complete failures.

How far a publisher can be expected to consider seriously the policy of art for art's sake is a more doubtful question. No sensible person could argue for it as an exclusive policy; but that dignity and

weight accrue to a house which encourages the highest class of work is a proposition which scarcely admits of denial. The greatest European firms are those which have the most fully adopted this principle; and, with the object-lesson which they supply of financial success and stability, it must have been remunerative to them to have done so, as it has been in the case of our own great book-publishers, whose output is by no means confined to fiction for light reading and rapid popular consumption. In their case, however, the standard of authorship in England has a long and famous literary history behind it; in that of music publication it is of recent growth. The producers of serious and valuable absolute music in this country date, at all events as far as numbers are concerned, from the seventies; and it might be urged that they have not had a sufficiently long tenure to make their presence felt, from a publisher's point of view, or to prove that they have come to stay. But all things must have a beginning, and it would seem curiously enough that the quality of prescience, which is as valuable an asset to a publisher as that of sound criticism, was not so lacking in England half a century, or even a century, ago as it is to-day. In Nottebohm's *Beethoveniana* we find that one Birchall, of Bond Street, was purchasing Trios and other works from Beethoven in 1816. Later on Sterndale Bennett found a publisher, Lamborn Cock, who brought out all his works in conjunction, be it noted, with a Leipzig house. At the present day, the era of a musical Renaissance in this country, which every one admits to exist, no corresponding effort on the part of the publishers seems to have

been initiated, and therefore no real impression of its capacity can be made upon the outside world.

I have alluded to the great importance of giving English works, when they are published, an equal chance as regards price with those of foreign countries. To make them even slightly more expensive is at once a drawback to them; but judging by the charges now made for them in comparison with German publications the position becomes almost hopeless. The cost of an English symphony, full score and orchestral parts sufficient for an orchestra of seventy, works out at £6, 10s.; that of (say) a Schumann symphony published by a German firm at £1, 12s. Orchestral concerts are expensive luxuries and are often maintained for art's sake at a loss. Those who risk giving them are not likely to choose an English work which involves them in four times the expense of a German one. Considering the long and well-established prestige of German music, as compared with the comparatively very recent effort of English music, the latter ought, if anything, to err on the side of cheapness, if it does not at least adopt equality. The advance in this country of creative work has moreover been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of orchestras and orchestral societies in the provinces, and the market is becoming larger every year. If some such financial facilities as I have indicated are not put within their reach, the works of modern England may be dead and buried even if they attain to publication.

On the whole it is fair to claim that a case has been made out for a move, and I trust that, when that move is made, it will be (in the interests both of composer

and of publisher) an international and not an insular one. There is much enthusiastic activity amongst our native composers now, and if it is not backed in some such way as I have suggested there is a fear which almost amounts to a certainty that the Renaissance of British music will be strangled in its cradle.

MEMORIES

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

(*From the 'Cambridge Review,' October* 15, 1892)

I HAVE been asked to put upon paper a few of my memories of Lord Tennyson. It is a difficult, nay, an almost impossible task to fulfil with the faintest approach to adequacy, especially at short notice; still I willingly make the attempt in the hope that a grain of useful information may perchance lie hidden in my bundle of straw.

It will always be of interest to University men to know those spots in Cambridge which are identified with his life and visits here. He was entered as a Pensioner at Trinity College, on Nov. 9, 1827, and matriculated on February 20, 1828, with his brother, Charles Tennyson, afterwards Tennyson-Turner. Their signatures appear side by side in the Registrary's book; it is interesting to note that Alfred Tennyson's signature is still unmistakable even to those who only know his later writings. Its form is a little more slanting, and not quite so large; but the characteristic squareness of the formation of the letters is already marked. He lived first in Rose Crescent, over the shop of one Pleasance, a tobacconist, a family still extant in Cambridge. The house was No. 12, and now forms the back part of the premises occupied by Mr. Reed, the silversmith. In subsequent visits

to Cambridge he never failed to visit his old landlord. At the end of his first year he moved to rooms on the first floor of No. 57 Corpus Buildings, where he joined his brother Charles and remained until he left Cambridge in 1831. He was one of a famous band of friends, which numbered amongst many others such intellects as James Spedding, Thackeray, Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), R. C. Trench (afterwards Archbishop of Dublin), W. H. Thompson (Master of Trinity), J. W. Blakesley (Dean of Lincoln), and Arthur Hallam. The last, whose name is indissolubly linked with Tennyson's, lived in the New Court of Trinity College, in the rooms No. 3 of letter G. Tennyson went down after the death of his father, and did not return to take a degree. He visited Cambridge for the last time in August 1886, shortly after the death of his second son, Lionel, when he stayed in the rooms occupied by Dr. Glaisher, on the second floor of letter A, New Court, the upper room looking down the avenue. Lionel Tennyson had lived on the same staircase in the rooms on the ground floor on the left hand side.

My first personal acquaintance with Lord Tennyson dates from Christmas 1879, when I spent a short time at Freshwater. Previously, however, in 1875, I had had experience of his thoughtful kindness. He had chosen me, an unknown and untried composer, to write the incidental music to his tragedy of Queen Mary for its production at the Lyceum Theatre, then under the management of Mrs. Bateman. Many difficulties were put in the way of the performance of the music, into the causes for which I had neither the wish nor the means to penetrate. Finally, however,

the management gave as an explanation that the music could not be performed, as the number of orchestral players required for its proper presentment would necessitate the sacrifice of two rows of stalls. To my young and disappointed soul came the news of a generous action which would have been a source of pride to many a composer of assured position and fame. The poet had offered, unknown to me, to bear the expense of the sacrificed seats for many nights, in order to allow my small share of the work to be heard. The offer was refused, but the generous action remains, one amongst the thousands of such quiet and stealthy kindnesses which came as second nature to him, and were probably as speedily forgotten by himself as they were lastingly remembered by their recipients.

My memories of Farringford are for the most part too sacred for print. Moreover, I shall never cease to be influenced by his own keen dislike of any public intrusion into his private life. I shall, therefore, only mention a few of the outer impressions which the house and its master made so indelibly upon me. The house essentially of a poet, but of one who, himself secluded, had the life of all contemporary humanity consistently and unbrokenly before him: a house which gave a sense of restfulness from the moment its threshold was crossed: full of memories of great minds both in picture and in book: a thoroughly English hearth which was so homely that the veriest stranger at once felt himself insensibly to be part of the household. There were many little customs which endeared it to men of different stamp and pursuit. To a University man, for instance, it

seemed only surprisingly natural to find that, after dinner was over, dessert was laid on the bare mahogany in another room after the fashion of a College Combination room. Tennyson's life was one of the most wholesome regularity. The daily walk from 11 to 1 and the shorter stroll in the afternoon were timed to the moment. Sometimes on returning from his morning walk he would find that he had taken five minutes less than his fixed two hours, and would insist upon finishing the allotted period by pacing up and down in front of the door. These two hours were the delight of those privileged to be his companions; an unceasing flow of reminiscences, of humorous stories and of wise sayings made the time pass with much begrudged rapidity. His favourite walks were along the Downs to the Beacon and back by the foot of the hill, and to Totland Bay through the grounds of 'ideal' Ward—

'Most generous of Ultramontanes—Ward.'

His sight though very short was most extraordinarily keen for small objects, and for microscopically tiny details which would escape the notice of men with apparently four times his power of vision. It was easy after one of these walks to understand what made him the greatest English landscape painter of the day. His memory was startling. Only a year and a half ago (when he was 81), sitting in the conservatory beside Mr. Ward's house, the conversation turned on Andrew Marvell. My companion, Mr. Arthur Coleridge, and I were amazed to hear him suddenly roll out some thirty lines of his poetry without a hesitation or halt, as an illustration of his criticism.

His manner of reading poetry has often been described. It was a chant rather than a declamation. A voice of deep and penetrating power, varied only by alteration of note and by intensity of quality. The notes were few, and he rarely read on more than two, except at the cadence of a passage, when the voice would slightly fall. He often accompanied his reading by gentle rippling gestures with his fingers. As a rule he adhered more to the quantity of a line than the ordinary reciter, for he had the rare gift of making the accent felt, without perceptibly altering the prosody. Without being a musician, he had a great appreciation of the fitness of music to its subjects, and was an unfailing judge of musical declamation. As he expressed it himself, he disliked music which went up when it ought to go down, and went down when it ought to go up. I never knew him wrong in his suggestions on this point. The most vivid instance I can recall was about a line in the 'Revenge'—

'Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew.'

When I played him my setting, the word 'devil' was set to a higher note in the question than it was in the answer; and the penultimate word 'they' was unaccented. He at once corrected me, saying that the second word 'devil' must be higher and stronger than the first, and the 'they' must be marked. He was perfectly right, and I altered it accordingly. It was apparently a small point, but it was this insisting on perfection of detail which made him the most valuable teacher of accurate declamation that it was possible for a composer to learn from. Of all his

poems which I heard him read, those he made most impressive were the 'Revenge,' and the 'Ode on the Duke of Wellington.' It may be interesting to record a point in the latter which, he said, was often misread. The line—

'Let the bell be toll'd,'

he read with strong emphasis upon the first as well as the third and fifth words,

– ∪ – ∪ –

not

∪ ∪ – ∪ –

He said it wanted three strokes of the bell, not two. 'Maud' he also read with a most extraordinary warmth and charm, particularly the climax of 'Come into the garden' and still more the stanza about the shell (Part II.) which he gave in a peculiarly thin and ghostly tone of voice, a quality he also used with great mastery in the Choric Song of the 'Lotus Eaters.' Nor was he less impressive when reciting Greek or German. Greek he vastly preferred as pronounced in the English fashion. He said it lost all its sonority and grandeur if modernised; and indeed to hear his illustration was in itself sufficient to convince. German he pronounced with a strong English accent, and yet I feel sure that Goethe himself would have acknowledged his reading of 'Kennst du das Land' to be a masterpiece. He was a great admirer of Goethe, and especially of this poem.[1] He once read to me from his works for nearly half an hour.

[1] He only disliked one line—

'O mein Beschützer, ziehn,'

of which he said, 'How could Goethe break one's teeth with those z's, while the rest is so musical?' Curiously enough, it is now known that Goethe erased 'Beschützer' and substituted 'Geliebter.'

The secret of the harmony of his verse lay in his incomparable ear for the juxtaposition of vowels and the exact suitability of each consonant. This makes it difficult to set his poems adequately to music. The music is so inborn in the poetry itself that it does not ask for notes to make incompleteness complete, and music is set to it rather for additional illustration than from inherent necessity. In discussing the sound of perfect lines, he told me that he considered the best line he ever wrote to be

'The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm.'
('Gardener's Daughter.')

He had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, at times serious, at times humorous. He would often light up a point with a turn of expression which showed the inward fire of poetry which permeated him; such as when describing his visit to Valentia in 1848, 'I looked out over the ocean with all the revolutions in Europe behind me.' His reminiscences of Cambridge in old days were most vivid. He especially delighted in one of his experiences of Whewell, for whom he had a deep veneration, still mixed with awe. On one occasion when Whewell was Tutor of Trinity and Proctor, he gave offence to the undergraduates by closing the galleries of the Senate House. As a result a double line was formed by them from the door of the Senate House to Trinity Gate, along which the momentarily unpopular Proctor was mercilessly hooted and hissed. A small band of his pupils, Tennyson, Hallam, and Stephen Spring-Rice were standing where Macmillan's shop now is, and gave expression to their sympathy by cheering him. Hearing this distinctive sound and misinterpreting it,

Whewell stopped and said, 'Mr. Tennyson, come to my rooms immediately.' When Tennyson entered, Whewell, scarcely able to articulate with wrath, demanded what he meant by his gross behaviour; but upon his pupil explaining that he had cheered and not hissed him, Whewell uttered some lion-like growls which gradually softened into an invitation to breakfast the next morning. He had many other anecdotes of Cambridge equally vivid and told with a most consummate sense of fun. Mr. J. W. Clark has kindly given me a few facts which bear upon this period of the poet's career. He gained the Chancellor's Medal for the best English Poem in 1829 with 'Timbuctoo.' The prize was adjudged to him in the following way: William Smyth, the Professor of Modern History, who was one of the electors, was away at Norwich, and all the exercises were sent to him. After reading them he returned them to the electors in Cambridge with the words 'Look at this' written across Tennyson's poem. This was sufficient to decide the award. The first time Thompson, afterwards Master of Trinity, saw him come into hall (he was a little late and therefore more conspicuous) he at once said, 'That man looks like a poet.' Edward Fitzgerald described him as 'a sort of Hyperion.' He was one of the early members, with Thompson and others, of the Society known to its own body as the C.C.S. and to the outside world as the Apostles. But they, though an elect and intellectual body, could unbend at times. Dr. Thompson recorded that on the evening upon which Alfred Tennyson left Cambridge (he had booked a place in the coach timed to leave the Bull at 10 P.M.), the friends met at the

rooms in Corpus Buildings for a light farewell supper. (Hall in those days was at four o'clock.) After supper the conversation flagged, and in order to beguile away the time until the coach drew up, they danced quadrilles. The naïveté of this charming story is a refreshing proof of their lack of all priggishness.[1]

Tennyson's appearance scarcely needs description. He has been treated with more than usual justice both by painters and photographers. In this he has been far more fortunate than his great contemporary Charles Darwin, whose magnificent head and figure and noble expression have never been satisfactorily reproduced in any of the well-known portraits. In Mrs. Cameron he possessed a friend who knew how to combine artistic feeling with the more mechanical process of photography. Of the later portraits, undoubtedly the most successful is that by Watts, in the Hall of Trinity. He has succeeded in suggesting the wonderful mobility of mouth which was the most striking characteristic of his expression. The head is apparently too pointed and insufficiently deep, perhaps from some effect of light which alters the foreshortening from the forehead. In a red chalk replica of this picture at Farringford this mistake is not observable. He had to the end of his life raven-black hair without a streak of grey; I well remember his

[1] His love of dancing never deserted him. I once, when he was past seventy, played a waltz while he careered round the drawing-room with a lady visitor. She told me that he danced to perfection. Not long afterwards he spoke to me in comic wrath of his having boasted to Fanny Kemble that he danced as well as ever he did, 'And she was very rude to me. She said (mimicking her), "For God's sake, don't let me see ye then!"'

playful imitation of anger when some versifier sent him an autograph poem, closing with a prayer to be allowed to 'lay this wreath upon the poet's silvery locks.' This he tossed across the sofa with the words, 'And I never had a grey hair in my head in my life.' But perhaps what was most remarkable about him was his hand. Massive and large, with long broad fingers square to the tips, and a softness of the palm which was always a surprise. It felt like a cushion of soft velvet, which fitted itself to every cranny of the hand it pressed. It always seemed to me the outward and visible sign of his noble nature. Strength, greatness, and grasp unmistakable, with an immense fund of tenderness which seemed to make itself felt without necessity of show. The intellect of a giant with the heart of a child. So great a power of sympathy, that to men of all ages he seemed a contemporary. Nothing in him grew old save his bodily frame; up to his death he lived not in the past but in the present with that rare prophetic instinct which kept him looking forward to the future. In him I feel, as I know all who were privileged to improve their lives by knowing him must feel, that I have lost one who personally compelled the most filial affection, whose influence cannot be replaced, neither happily can it be effaced. Like his own Spirit in his first prize Poem he has taught how

> 'to attain
> By shadowing forth the Unattainable;
> And step by step to scale that mighty stair
> Whose landing-place is wrapt about with clouds
> Of glory, of heaven.'

Ernst Frank (1881).

ERNST FRANK

(1890)

On Saturday, August the 17th, 1889, died one of the most enlightened and large-hearted musicians of our time. Ernst Frank, a native of Munich, made his earlier studies under the guidance of the veteran brothers Franz and Vincenz Lachner, and his career from the day upon which he entered his profession was one long record of devotion to the best interests of his art. While fulfilling an engagement as one of the sub-conductors at the Vienna Opera House, he accepted an invitation from Bologna to superintend the historical first production of *Lohengrin* in Italy. The experiment led the way to a lasting success of that work in the land of song, and the result was, in the opinion of all his Italian colleagues, mainly due to his genius, tact, and ability. Having thus assured his position, he had not long to wait for a post of the first importance in his own country. The conductorship of the Mannheim Opera having fallen vacant, Frank was at once appointed first Capellmeister. The admirable performance on that stage of Wagner's *Meistersinger* under his direction made a considerable stir in Germany at the time, and directed much attention to a theatre which had not been remarkable for any exceptional excellence. During his

sojourn at Mannheim occurred an incident which was the chief landmark in his life. He was one day visited by a stranger, whose works, since become of world-wide celebrity, owed their first acceptance to Frank's foresight and enthusiasm. The interview was described to me by my friend himself in a way too vivid and picturesque to be satisfactorily reproduced. A knock came at his door on the top story of a very lofty town house, and a gaunt figure entered his room, breathing painfully, and with consumption writ plain upon his face. As soon as the stranger could speak, he began, 'My name is Goetz, of Zürich.' Frank greeted him, and for some minutes vainly tried to discover the object of his visit. At last Goetz mustered up courage enough to stutter out, 'To tell you the truth, I have written an opera.'

'So much the better,' said my friend cheerily.

'Ah!' said Goetz, 'you are the first conductor who has said that much to me, all the others say, "So much the worse."'

The sentence showed a true appreciation of Frank's nature, and the words of encouragement were not misplaced; the opera was *The Taming of the Shrew.* From that moment the two were fast friends, working together through the score, improving, shortening ('You are taking out my life-blood,' Goetz used to say, when some inevitable cut was decided on), and preparing the work for the stage. The first performance was anxious work for the warm-hearted conductor. The invalid composer lay on a sofa in the stage-box, so weak and ill that a failure, as Frank knew too well, would have killed him then and there. He often spoke to me afterwards of the weight of this

double anxiety, his hopes and fears at once for the success of the opera and for the life of its composer. The brilliant result is now a matter of history, and in its recording it is but fitting that the generous man whom we have lost should have his just share. Goetz, partially revivified by the reception of his opera, as a mark of his gratitude dedicated to Frank his Symphony in F major, the work which has most safely assured his popularity in this country, and set to work upon a second dramatic composition on the subject of Francesca da Rimini. Of this he wrote the book himself, with the help and advice of Joseph Viktor Widmann of Berne, the brilliant librettist of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This work, alas! he did not live to complete. The first and second acts he nearly finished, the third he left only in sketches; and his last expressed wishes were that Frank, as being best acquainted with his method of working, should complete the opera; as a final referee for consultation he named Johannes Brahms. Frank undertook the duty with a heavy heart, but so finely was his difficult share of the work performed, that Brahms had no words for it but those of hearty approval. The preface to the opera is the best possible record of the care and judgment with which the editor entered upon his hard task. It was produced at Mannheim, and at first was accorded a large measure of success, but whether from the gloominess of the subject, or from a certain lack of brightness and relief in its treatment, it has not shared the general acceptance accorded to its sister opera. There is no denying that in its poetry and beauty of utterance it strikes a far higher note than the comedy, and it is hard to believe

that even in these days of express speed and electric restlessness its merits will be left behind, and its beauties wasted and forgotten. After the death of Goetz, Frank exerted himself to the utmost to ensure a hearing for his works, and the publishing house of Kistner at Leipzig ably seconded his efforts by engraving the posthumous compositions which he selected for publication.

In 1878 Frank's intimate friend, Otto Devrient, with whom he had long been associated at Mannheim, and in whose ability and earnestness of purpose he had complete faith, accepted the directorate of the theatres at Frankfort-on-Main, whither went also Frank as his first Capellmeister. Owing to some differences with the Theatre Committee, Devrient shortly afterwards resigned, and Frank, who stretched his friendship to his colleague to a point which some thought even unnecessary, followed suit: living on for some time longer at Frankfort as a teacher, and in almost daily intercourse with his friend Madame Schumann. By her he was intrusted with the supervision of the full score of her husband's opera, *Genoveva*, then about to be engraved for the first time, and of the new edition of the *Faust* music. He also wrote a short comic opera which was brought out at Carlsruhe. But he was not long allowed to remain in retirement. The resignation of Hans von Bülow at the Court Theatre of Hanover left vacant a post which, in spite of dangers and difficulties unusual even in those most inflammable of institutions, Frank accepted, and by his excellent tact succeeded in carrying on with signal success. The excellent orchestra, which is the pride of that opera-house, he

maintained at its high level of fame, and the performances which he directed both inside and outside the walls of the theatre were models of their kind. His position there was at all times difficult, not least so owing to the unfriendly attitude of a press which, partly from political motives, was bitterly and unreasonably opposed to all the policy of the Prussian Court Intendant. This Frank endured silently and without a word of complaint, out of a spirit of loyalty to a chief, whose temperament was vastly different from his own, and with whose views he had but little in common. In the intervals of his hard work he wrote an opera on a large scale upon the subject of *Hero and Leander*, which shortly after its completion was produced both at Berlin and at Hanover. Despite, however, a sound musicianship and picturesque colouring, it only obtained a *succès d'estime*, and did not long keep the boards. Shortly afterwards, in 1886, he wrote in conjunction with his friend Widmann an opera on the subject of *The Tempest*, which he had hopes of seeing performed at Frankfort. He was, however, doomed to be disappointed; he arrived there only to find that a work by another composer on the same subject had been already accepted. The strain and annoyance of theatre business, his disappointment with regard to his own compositions, and the death of his father, which occurred in the autumn of that year, insidiously told upon his constitution, and in the winter his health gave way. He took a temporary rest, and was apparently restored to sufficient health to enable him to resume his work. But the improvement was only temporary; his overworked and worried brain gave way under the strain,

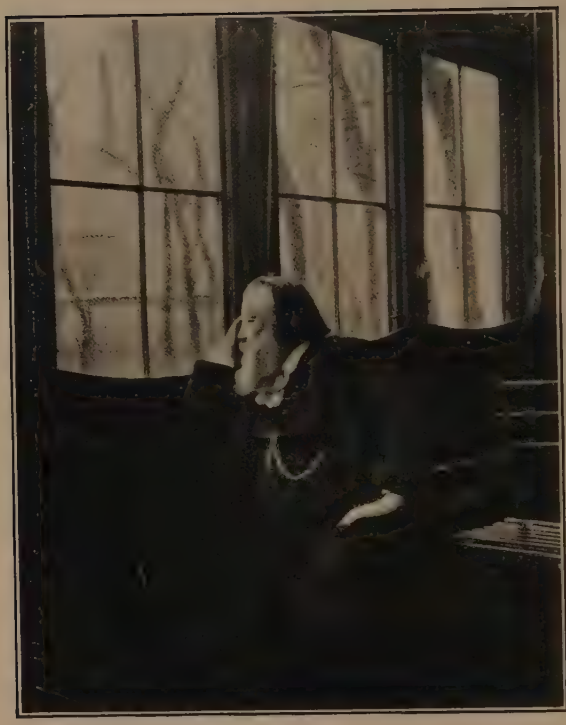
and after a long illness he died at the comparatively early age of forty-three. The distressing nature of his ailment brought with it but one mercy, he was spared the knowledge of the death of his only son: the double grief has fallen on the solitary wife and mother, who lives to mourn them both.

As a composer Ernst Frank did not make any considerable mark. He had been too long identified with the conductor's desk to be able to free himself sufficiently from the influence of the works he had daily to rehearse and direct. Always musicianly and well-designed, his writings lacked that independence and force which alone can give life to an artistic creation. If his lot had not been cast in a round of duty which involved the production of other men's compositions, the result would doubtless have been more worthy of his deserts; for he had all the temperament of an artist of the first rank. The greatest gift he possessed, his quick and sympathetic appreciation of the powers of others, returned evil for good and militated against his own chances. As a conductor, he was of the very first order; careful, enthusiastic, full at once of steadiness and fire, with a sure grasp of the meaning of his author. In his rendering of simpler music, he was as exact as in his presentment of the most modern and complicated scores. If Wagner was the hobby of his youth, Mozart was the favourite of his maturity; to conduct the *Figaro* was one of his greatest pleasures, and his boyish enjoyment of it was assuredly shared alike by his artists and his public. Of Wagner's works he most loved the *Meistersinger*; Brahms had no warmer admirer and no truer friend. He belonged to no party, but

appreciated what was best in all, without being blind to faults, or sparing in his criticism of what he considered bad art. A more unprejudiced musician has seldom lived. His wide literary attainments were of additional service in keeping his mind open to all shades and tints of feeling in others.

The world has many a brilliant genius to boast of, many a warrior, politician, artist of commanding position and easy fame; it is not so rich in the unselfish helpers of the fame of others, in the quiet men of literature who, like Henry Bradshaw, spend their lives in helping forward and assisting other men's work and take no credit for themselves; in the unselfish and self-obliterating artists who, like Ernst Frank, set themselves to find out unknown genius in others, and to make it appreciated at its due worth. The lives of such men are by their very nature more beautiful than the more dazzling and exciting records of epoch-making names. They are the corner-stones, the foundations, without which the carved pinnacles, the delicate tracery, the tapering spire cannot be raised or fashioned, and deprived of which they would fall. Such architects of other men's fame are too frequently passed by unnoticed by their contemporaries, but they cannot be forgotten by those whose lives they have helped to brighten, whose studies they have helped to widen, and whose aims they have helped to direct, to encourage, and to realise. It would ill become me, who, an unknown foreigner, received the same welcome, the same help, the same sound advice and active encouragement from this generous brother in art which he accorded to worthier countrymen of his own, to be silent now as to his

loyal and unswerving power of friendship, a friendship which showed itself in deeds as well as treasured words. I may be pardoned if this poor tribute which I lay to his memory has so far a tinge of personal feeling, for I am conscious that I am but adding one to the list of the many obligations of his brethren in acknowledging my own; debts of honour which neither they nor I can now ever hope to repay save by following in his steps and honouring his name.



Brahms (circa 1893).

A FEW MEMORIES OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1904)

It is a curious fact that the lives of the majority of the greatest composers have proved to be very unfruitful ground for their biographers. Inasmuch as they consisted mainly of writing music, eating, sleeping, and exercise (of sorts usually the reverse of sporting), the record is meagre except in the case of those who had to do with the dramatic side of their art. Of Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, there is little to tell; and so it is with the latest of their great line, Johannes Brahms. An article by Mr. Daniel Gregory Mason upon this last of the giants, which contained many interesting personal touches, besides some vastly acute criticism, has encouraged me to put down a few memories, dating mainly from his middle and later period, which may some day be useful when a future Spitta or Thayer arises to write his Life from the point of view of a future generation. But there is nothing striking about them; they are at best feeble side-lights upon a nature which was more than commonly *intime*, and which, moreover, was veiled by a considerable amount of purposeful paradox.

The first time I ever heard the name of Brahms was about 1867; as I lived until 1870 in Ireland, removed from the reach of practical orchestral and

chamber music by seven hours' rail and four hours' sea, the lateness of the date is not remarkable. But I shall never forget the amazing effect which was produced upon me by hearing the variations on a theme of Handel, or how much of my small pocket-money I spent in buying as many of his works as I could get. I knew nothing of the Schumann article, nor anything about him save his music, and the grip it took of me at fifteen has never relaxed since. Nothing that was not inherently sincere could possibly remain so lifelong a possession of any musician. My first sight of the composer himself was at the remarkable Schumann Festival given at Bonn under the direction of Joachim in 1873, where he sat, tawny-haired and clean-shaven, beside his 'second mother,' Clara Schumann. My first speech with him was at a dinner-party given on the day following the close of that Festival by Ferdinand Hiller at Cologne; but it was short and uninteresting; he was somewhat bored and unapproachable, and not (to tell the truth) in the best of tempers.[1] I had, however, the opportunity of studying his face, which I never again saw without the now familiar beard. The clean-cut, refined beauty of his boyish features had vanished, the jowl was thick and powerful, and the mouth rather large and coarse. But his eyes, which were

[1] He never was, I am told by a friend of his, at Hiller's. They grated on each other as did also Hiller and von Bülow. But Brahms never went so far in showing his dislike as the pianist did. Von Bülow once gave a piano recital in Cologne, and, after mounting the platform, saw Hiller sitting before him in the front row. He speedily went down again, and presently there appeared two attendants, who turned the pianoforte round the other way; after which the recital began. I could never quite understand why Hiller roused such wrath. I never found him anything but a kindly and a courteous gentleman.

Brahms (circa 1853).

of an astonishingly deep and luminous violet, were fascinating, and the brow and head most noble in proportion. Without the least personal resemblance, his face had a quality in common with Wagner and Liszt, in that the upper half was very ideal, and the lower very human. It is quite erroneous to imagine that Brahms was of Jewish descent. A glance at his purely Teutonic features and at his springing walk was enough to show that he had no Semitic blood. His friend Dietrich, of Oldenburg, told me that Brahms was an old Silesian word signifying 'reed.' Max Bruch once roused the lion in him at a supper by saying, 'Prosit, Abrahams!' and got in reply the crushingly unexpected retort, 'Prosit, Baruch!'

Like many great men, he had a suit of armour which he put on to meet the stranger. Tennyson's armour was brusqueness, Leighton's was excessive polish, Brahms' could be downright rudeness. But all three as soon as their armour was put by, were alike in one respect—they were simple to the point of boyishness. Brahms most of all hated the lioniser, and was for ever on the look-out for him. Returning one day from a walk at Heidelberg, he was met by a man who stopped him and asked if he were not Brahms; on receiving an affirmative reply, the stranger expanded into eulogies of his compositions. Brahms put on a puzzled look, then suddenly said, 'Oh, you must mean my brother; he was taking a walk with me on the hill just now,' indicating where the mythical relation had gone, and the unwelcome celebrity-hunter rushed on up the hill.

In 1877 Cambridge University offered him (together with Joachim) an honorary degree. Mr. Mason

in his book *From Grieg to Brahms*, p. 178, has a remark about this which is erroneous, and is really a confusion between two wholly distinct events. He says that 'when the University of Cambridge offered him a degree, suggesting that he should write a new work for the occasion, he replied that if any of his old works seemed good enough to them, he should be happy to receive the honour, but that he was too busy to write one.' The actual facts are these: Brahms hesitated long about visiting Cambridge, and, being much pressed to do so both by Joachim and Frau Schumann, was almost on the point of accepting, when unfortunately the authorities of the Crystal Palace got wind of the possible visit, and announced in the *Times* that he would be invited to conduct at one of their Saturday concerts. This piece of over-zeal wrecked the visit. The university did not ask him to write a new work for the occasion, but although he would not come, and could not be given a degree *in absentiâ*, he intrusted the manuscript score and parts of his first Symphony in C Minor (which had then only once been played in Carlsruhe) to Joachim, and it was performed together with the *Schicksalslied* at the concert of the University Musical Society, at which his presence was so desired. The incident to which Mr. Mason refers was probably an invitation in 1887 to write a work for the Leeds Festival, an institution which had hitherto wholly neglected his compositions, and which was conducted by Sullivan, who made no secret of his lack of sympathy with them. To this he replied: 'I cannot well decide to promise you a new work for your Festival. Should you consider one or other of

my existing works worthy the honour of a performance, it would give me great pleasure. But if this, as it appears, is not the case, how could I hope to succeed this time? If, however, the charm of novelty is a *sine quâ non*, forgive me if I admit that I neither rightly understand nor greatly sympathise with such a distinction.' A very pretty *riposte*, and a thoroughly dignified specimen of epistolary satire.

The Cambridge performance of the C Minor Symphony attracted almost every musician of importance in England, and much interest was excited among Cambridge men by the curious coincidence that the horn theme in the introduction to the last movement was, nearly note for note, a quotation of the famous hour-chimes of St. Mary's (the University Church) bells. Brahms' music had long been more deeply appreciated and universally accepted in England than in Germany, owing probably in a measure to the fact that we had no serious battle-ground of Wagnerian and anti-Wagnerian parties; the performance of this symphony set an imperishable keystone on his fame among Britons. I had myself the curious good fortune to compare the attitude of an English and German audience towards one of his orchestral works. In 1875 I heard within a few weeks two performances of his Serenade in A (without violins), first at the Philharmonic Society of London, and afterwards at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. In London the enthusiasm was so great that two movements (the scherzo and the minuet) had to be repeated. In Leipzig the entire work went literally without one hand being raised to applaud.

A short time after the Cambridge performance, I had made my first collection of Irish folk-songs, and knowing the interest which Brahms took in such work, I asked and obtained his leave to dedicate it to him. The next time I visited Vienna, I went with Hans Richter to see him. He opened the door of his little flat himself, clad in a jersey and trousers, and led us through a bare outer room, and his bedroom, scarcely less bare save for a drawing of 'Anselmo's Grab' over his very short and stumpy bed, into his study, a double room crammed with books, music, and literature of all sorts. He greeted Richter warmly, and when I was introduced gave me a most distant and suspicious bow. I bethought me of the stranger at Heidelberg, and looked out for squalls. I was quite sure he was aware of who I was, but was going to measure my capacity for lion-hunting. His chance came; he offered Richter a cigar, and was then handing the box to me, when he snatched it back with a curt, 'You are English, you don't smoke!' To which I replied, with an impertinence which it required some courage to assume, 'I beg pardon, the English not only smoke, but they even compose music sometimes,' making a simultaneous dash after the retreating cigar-box. For one moment he looked at me like a dangerous mastiff, and then burst out laughing. The ice was broken and never froze again. I caught sight of some fine engravings, and he spent the best part of the morning showing me his complete collection of Piranesi engravings, and other treasures which he had picked up in Italy during the previous summer. He only mentioned music once, describing most humorously an opera which he had

heard at Brescia, which consisted, he said, entirely of 'Schluss-Cadenzen,' but was so beautifully sung that he rejoiced in listening to them over and over again.

When I next visited Vienna I went to see him without an appointment, thinking that I should surely find him at home at eleven o'clock. But his housekeeper told me that he had just gone to dinner. I was so astonished that I said to her, 'In Heaven's name, what time does Brahms eat his breakfast?' 'At five,' said the dame; 'he does all his work before eleven, and is out the rest of the day.' However, I fell in with him later, and sat with him through a rehearsal of Gluck's *Alceste* at the Opera House, over which he waxed enthusiastic. His two favourite haunts in Vienna were Strauss's band and the Opera. While there I heard of a tremendous verbal castigation which he had given at a restaurant to a young man who thought he would gain his favour by sneering at Wagner.

I made two attempts to induce him to visit England after this. First in 1889, when his *Requiem* was given at the Leeds Festival, I wrote and told him that if he would come to Cambridge *viâ* Harwich, I would go to Leeds and back with him, and conceal his identity from every one; but he was not to be stirred. Last, in 1893, when the Cambridge University Musical Society was about to celebrate its fiftieth birthday, we wrote once more, and offered him, with Verdi, an honorary degree. He was this time sorely tempted and much touched by the request, but he turned it off by saying how old he would seem beside the everlasting youth of Verdi,

and how much nicer it would be if I would go and take walks with him at Cadenabbia instead.[1] Our next and last meeting was in Berlin, the Christmas of the famous Jameson Raid. He came to conduct his two Piano Concertos and the Academic Festival Overture at a concert given by D'Albert, and was much fêted and in high good humour. At an interesting dinner-party given by Joachim, at which were present also his friends Professor Dohrn of Naples, and von Herzogenberg the composer, an amusingly characteristic scene occurred. Joachim in a few well-chosen words was asking us not to lose the opportunity of drinking the health of the greatest composer, when, before he could finish the sentence, Brahms bounded to his feet, glass in hand, and called out, 'Quite right! Here 's Mozart's health!' and walked round, clinking glasses with us all. His old hatred of personal eulogy was never more prettily expressed. Within a year and a half he was dead, and in this same house Joachim was showing me the first letter which Schumann had written to him after their first meeting at Düsseldorf, with the famous sentence, '*Das ist der der kommen musste*,' and the autograph score of the first Piano Concerto, which contains that most impressive key to the meaning of the Adagio—the words of the *Benedictus qui venit*, written over the notes of the theme.

A most remarkable and extraordinary personality was Brahms. Humorous, fearless, far-seeing, sometimes over-rough to his contemporaries, but a worshipper of and worshipped by young children; with a very noble, generous, and ideal side to his

[1] The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen lent him the Villa Carlotta that year.

character, and a curiously warped and sensual side as well. He could look like Jupiter Olympus at one moment, and like Falstaff the next, but the Jupiter never seemed to suffer in the end; and, assuredly, if a man's work be any key to his real soul, the last chorale which he wrote, the touching *O Welt, ich muss dich lassen*, is a standing proof of the type of qualities which were dominant in him.[1] For kings and princes he had no concern except as fellow-men. In that respect he resembled Beethoven. He could afford to be intimate with them because he was independent of them. During the Meiningen Festival, he stayed at the castle, and was in the habit of taking his constitutional at six o'clock in the morning. The Duke knocked at his door at eight, and asked him if he had had a pleasant walk. 'Yes, sir,' said Brahms; 'I have taken a stroll round the three neighbouring kingdoms.' While he was on the same visit, he electrified a state dinner by an outburst upon the attitude of Europe towards Japan. The war between China and Japan had just been declared, and every one was discussing the certain downfall of the smaller power. Brahms prophesied the reverse, and went on to say that after Japan had beaten China, Europe would step in, in its selfish way, and prevent her reaping the fruits of her victory. The Grand Duke reminded him that Europe had interests to safeguard, to which Brahms rapped out a sharp retort.[2] All ended peacefully, but the little inci-

[1] He knew the Bible by heart. It used to be a safe trap to misquote in his presence some text from (say) Ezra or Nehemiah, and he would at once pounce upon the blunder.

[2] This incident was related to me shortly afterwards by one of the guests.

dent served to prove how much more far-sighted a politician he was than many of his professionally diplomatic contemporaries.

Of his later friendships, perhaps the most curiously assorted was that with Hans von Bülow. He had sufficient insight to appreciate (what few did) the very great nobility of the character of that most versatile and peppery of men. To any who spoke complainingly of him, Brahms always answered with a request to remember his great and unique qualities; and certainly von Bülow repaid him with a devotion which never varied. And if he was sometimes brusque to his contemporaries, he could show in an eminent degree a modest deference to his seniors. The last vision I had of him was sitting beside the diminutive form of the aged Menzel, drinking in like a keen schoolboy every word the great old artist said, with an attitude as full of unaffected reverence as of unconscious dignity.

JOSEPH ROBINSON.
(From a Caricature by F. Goedecker. 1877.*)*

JOSEPH ROBINSON

(1898)

A VERY remarkable figure in the musical world passed away a few weeks ago in Dublin. Joseph Robinson is perhaps to older musicians more of a name than a personality, and to younger men of the craft who have not crossed the Channel of St. George even his name may not be associated with any striking fact or any historical event. But for that lacuna in their experiences we have to thank what Lord Beaconsfield called the melancholy ocean, and the comparatively scant notices of his career are perhaps the greatest tribute to his patriotism. For he was born, lived, worked, and died in the city of his birth, just too far west of Europe to win fame and too far east of America to earn dollars. To Ireland he was devoted, and no inducements to desert it for a more lucrative and fame-bringing centre of activity ever found favour in his eyes. Such personalities are rare, and their claim to recognition at the hands of posterity is irrefragable. The fact that a career is by choice and conviction circumscribed in extent impels the chronicler all the more to do justice to its merits when the work is closed and the worker silent; especially when those merits are of a sort which would have compelled the widest admiration if their

possessor had so willed it. No excuse is therefore necessary for placing on record a few points in the career of a man who was both by culture and ability one of the best musicians of our time.

Joseph Robinson was born in Dublin in August 1816. He was the fourth son of Francis Robinson, a professor of music, who founded an important society in Dublin in 1810 for studying the works of Handel. His three elder brothers, John, William, and Francis, were all, like the subject of this sketch, singers of exceptional merit; but none were equal to the Benjamin of the family in organising power or in mastery of the art. The 'four wonderful brothers,' as they were called in Dublin circles, were all connected from their earliest days with the two cathedrals which Dublin has the distinction (unique as far as the British Islands are concerned) of possessing. When they grew up, they formed a quartet of surprising perfection; John was the first tenor (his voice, according to Mr. Hercules MacDonnell, ranged to the high D), Francis the second tenor, Joseph the baritone, and William the bass. They were the first to bring before the public the great store of German part-songs, and were also the backbone of that historical body, the Hibernian Catch Club, which to this day preserves in Ireland the best traditions of the English glee. William Robinson's bass voice, which went down to a clear and resonant double C, was at times the subject of merriment and a joke or two of no mean merit. It was frequently alleged that in the passage from Blow's famous anthem, 'Fell down, down, down before the throne,' William produced the effect of a note far below even his range on the final word by

pointing his finger down with an impassioned gesture, and gazing at the same moment open-mouthed towards the groined roof of the cathedral. Later in his life, when a younger bass, Richard Smith (also an excellent singer) took a place in the choir as his deputy, William Robinson was once told that his day as a basso profondo was eclipsed. For Smith had a trick of pronouncing the syllable 'er' on all occasions as 'ar'; and a Job's comforter said to William one day, 'It is all very well for you, Robinson, you can only sing low C, Dick Smith sings low R.' William was in appearance a caricature of Joseph, so much so that great amusement was caused on one occasion in my presence when the arrangements for the choir at the installation of the Prince of Wales as a Knight of St. Patrick were being made. The members chosen to sing had to answer to their names in the practice room, and when William's name was called, Joseph called out from the back of the room in the nasal tone so well known to his friends, 'No brother of mine, sir.'

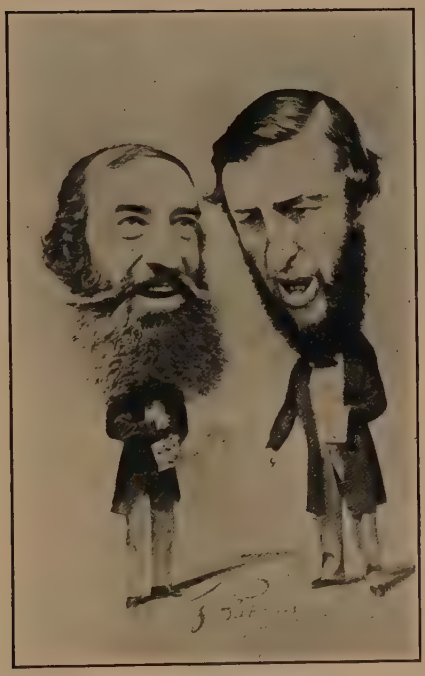
Francis was the gentlest and most urbane of the quartet, a man of singular personal charm and refined ability. He had a tenor voice, which without being in any sense robust, was intensely sympathetic in colour, and which was helped out by a highly-trained musical faculty. I have never heard any singer who has approached him even in his comparatively old age in the expression which he imparted to Schubert's *Ave Maria*. No violoncellist of the highest attainments could have surpassed him in what I may term the bowing and phrasing of the melody. The last time I heard him sing this song was at a time when

he was over seventy years of age, and it indelibly impressed me. He gave me my first lessons in harmony and thorough-bass, and very sound they were.

Joseph, like his brothers, went through the cathedral training, which at that time, both in Dublin and Armagh, were excellent schools for young musicians. The traditions of Stevenson were still fresh, though the older composer himself had more or less retired. The knowledge of and admiration for Haydn and Mozart, with which that very remarkable man had imbued the musical spirit of Dublin, could not fail to have a broadening effect on the minds of the younger and more enthusiastic generation; and to this may be traced the catholic taste for all schools of good music which distinguished Joseph Robinson among all the musicians of his time in Ireland, and which kept him to his latest years in possession of that most enviable of all gifts, a young mind. After leaving the choir school he joined the Anacreontic Society, an institution for the practice of orchestral music, where, as he used to say, the band was one of the most ill-balanced in the world. The favourite instruments were at that period the double-bass, and, more particularly, the flute. The row of fifteen double-bass cases, which formed part of its collection, is still one of my boyish memories; they were but a remnant of the great regiment to which they belonged. The flutes were so numerous that the Society had to pass a rule that not more than twenty players of that instrument should be allowed in the orchestra at the same time. This Society afterwards merged into a more ambitious scheme, which was

dubbed the Philharmonic Society. Here symphonies by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were studied with avidity, and for a time very fairly given, and artists of European fame were engaged. So long as Robinson took an active interest in its fortunes it prospered reasonably well; but it fell into the hands of a well-meaning but wholly incompetent conductor, and in course of time was reduced to bankruptcy. The only terms in which the leading Dublin critics could describe the virtues of this worthy were invariably reproduced after each concert:—'Mr. —— conducted himself as usual.' In 1834, when Robinson was eighteen years of age, he began his first important work. He founded the 'Antient Concerts,' assumed the conductorship, and while he held the post (a period of twenty-nine years) he produced all the best of the old masters, and introduced into Dublin the works of Mendelssohn almost contemporaneously with their performance in this country. The chorus was small, but perfect in balance, and of beautiful quality. They sang well individually as well as collectively; for the conductor had the gift of training them not merely in the notes themselves, but in the manner of singing them. Moreover, he made a point of having a band which was complete in all respects. In carrying this principle he had much perversity and prejudiced ignorance to contend against. The ordinary committee-man's mind could not see the importance of having four horns in accordance with the score, and would urge that 'sure two would be enough; ye'll have the horns jostling ache other on the platform.' But he won, and got his reward in the admirable taste which his

audience developed. One of his oldest friends has told me that the secret of his success was twofold: he never listened to the insidious opinion proffered at a bad rehearsal that the music 'will be all right in the evening,' and a work never went so well but that he tried to make it go better. His performances of *St. Paul* and *Elijah* were quite admirable, and he was in direct possession of the traditions of their execution, for he made special journeys to hear them under the composer's direction in England. In the course of these expeditions he made the personal acquaintance of Mendelssohn, who at once recognised his gifts, and had a warm personal regard for himself. On the occasion of the first performance of the *Elijah,* my father accompanied Robinson to Birmingham, where they had the pleasantest intercourse with the great composer. They have both frequently described to me his very boyish fun and his delight in a good joke; how he extemporised a double fugue on the subject of 'the horse and his rider' on the organ in the Town Hall to a few friends; how, after the final rehearsal of *Elijah,* he slid down the banisters of the long staircase with his feet in the air, and wound up the day by a supper with them at the Woolpack Inn, where my father rather shocked the serious Sterndale Bennett by performing Punch and Judy over the door with his fingers clothed in napkins, and introduced a Mozartian ghost to the music of the *Commendatore.* On this occasion Mendelssohn promised Robinson to orchestrate 'Hear my Prayer' for the Antient Concerts. Shortly after his death, in the following year, Robinson received the score from his executors; it



JOSEPH ROBINSON AND JOHN STANFORD.
(Paris, 1861.)

was written exactly for the band which Robinson had enumerated to him, and he had taken his hint to 'be sure to use the kettledrums in the second movement': with what effect any one who glances at the score will appreciate.

While carrying on this work, he also conducted the University Choral Society (the oldest body of the kind in the three kingdoms), and was not less successful with the students. He had curious experiences with the amateurs of that institution. On one occasion an amateur Polyphemus essayed with fair success, 'O ruddier than the cherry,' but had not carefully read his words, for he persistently sang 'kindlings blithe and merry,' a proceeding which provoked great merriment in the room, and led to a species of duet between the conductor and the singer at the concert—thus:

Singer: With kindlings blithe and merry.
Robinson: (kidlings)
Singer: With kindlings blithe and merry.
Robinson: (kidlings)

The interpolation being very clear and *allegro*.

In 1849 he married Miss Fanny Arthur, a sister of a well-known banker in Paris, who was a most accomplished pianist, well-known both abroad and at home. Her first appearance in London was at the Musical Union in 1855, when she played with Ernst. Their house in Dublin became the centre of all musicians who came to Ireland. Thalberg, Rubinstein, and Joachim were frequently there. One of their closest and best friends was that most excellent of men and most delightful of companions,

the veteran G. A. Osborne. He once described to me his first return to Ireland, after a long sojourn in Paris, where he had often met Robinson. Driven out by the Revolution of 1848, he came to London, and made an expedition to his native island. When he arrived on the pier at Kingstown, the first person he saw was Robinson, and after greeting him warmly he begged him as a friend to recommend some quiet comfortable hotel in Dublin wherein to stay. Robinson thought for a while, and said he only knew one which he could recommend, a family hotel at 3 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, but that the attendance was abominable, though the food was fair. He advised him to drive there straight from the station, to ring for the servant, explain that he had been recommended to the house, but warned of the bad service, and that he would tell his friend Mr. Robinson, who had sent him, if he was not properly looked after. Osborne carried out his instructions to the letter, ordered his dinner, and came down to the coffee-room, to find Joseph standing with his back to his own fireplace, in roars of laughter at the success of his queer invitation. The first time I ever heard Joachim play was upon one of these occasions (the pieces were the Kreutzer Sonata and the G minor fugue of Bach), and I well remember Robinson saying to me, 'Listen to that man' (he was then twenty-eight), 'he is the only violinist who brings flames out of the fiddle.'

In 1853 he organised a performance on a great scale (one thousand performers) at the opening of the International Exhibition. In 1856 he and his wife joined the Irish Academy of Music, and gave it

the great importance which has secured its existence and success up to the present time. He never lost his interest in its welfare, and never failed to help on its many promising pupils. In 1873 he went to the Schumann Festival at Bonn, a proceeding which surprised his friends, for he had never shown any predilection for that composer's works; but, as usual, he thought it his business to correct his views by experience, and the result was a whole-hearted admission of his mistake in depreciating the great master. His admiration of the *Faust* music was immense, and he at once organised a private performance of it on his return. His attitude towards Wagner was equally broad-minded. He disliked him on paper, and cured himself of his prejudice by attending any performance of his operas which he could get to.

In 1876 he founded the 'Dublin Musical Society,' an institution which still exists,[1] and possesses a very fine body of voices. While he was conductor, he was presented with an address and a purse of sovereigns. He very gracefully returned the purse, with the humorous plea that if he accepted it he would never be able to abuse the chorus again. In 1879 his wife died, and he did not long retain his position of conductor of this new Society, though he took an active interest in its proceedings to the end of his life. He not long afterwards married a second time, and his wife and one son survive him.

As a composer, Robinson wrote principally songs, thoroughly vocal songs, always musicianly and never vulgar. He had a thorough contempt for the royalty

[1] Now no more.

ballad, which he called 'imposture.' That he could tackle more complicated work when he chose, is proved by a very admirable short anthem, 'Not unto us.' He edited Stevenson's anthems excellently. But his most valuable work was his arrangement of Irish folk songs. He may be said with truth to be the first musician who treated them with real artistic feeling, and with true insight into their national character. If he had done nothing else, Ireland ought to be grateful to him for this work. His friendship with the late Lord Dunraven, Dr. Graves (the Bishop of Limerick), and the De Veres gave him an opportunity of studying the antiquarian side of Irish life, which he turned to the best uses in his treatment of Irish melodies.

His personality was unique. He had strong likes and dislikes. His heroes were 'giants,' and his enemies 'impostors.' His face, rather Jewish in type, was full of a kindly sardonic humour, which his rather jerky and nasal manner of speech exactly suited. He had, like Costa, the grip of a field-marshal. He never brooked contradiction in his own business, and he was a martinet, though a kindly one. As a conductor of choral and orchestral works he was certainly in the front rank, and if he had lived in England would undoubtedly have held any important post as a matter of course, and held it admirably, for he possessed both the temperament and electricity necessary to a conductor, and had the keenest instinct for what Wagner called the greatest gift a conductor can have, the right *tempo*. He was generous to a fault, and died comparatively poor, mainly owing to his open-handedness to friends in worse circumstances

than himself. When he was too old and ill to appreciate it, the Government gave him a small Civil List pension, by which he only profited for a few weeks. But his memory will long be green in the hearts of his friends, old and young, and Ireland and her musical children will always remember him with gratitude, affection and respect.

JOACHIM

(1907)

Μηδὲν ἄγαν was essentially the guiding principle of Joseph Joachim; but with the important qualification that everything which he interpreted was to reach exactly, and not to fail to reach, the point beyond which exaggeration would begin. He satisfied without surfeiting, he warmed without scorching. He commanded precisely the right amount of emotion to touch the higher qualities of appreciation in his hearers, without ever by an excess of it overstimulating their nerves or rousing hysterical passion. He appealed, therefore, to the healthy, and the few detractors he had (and they were not of this country) will be found amongst the worshippers of excitement and the apostles of humbug. It was this guiding principle which impressed itself so markedly upon two excellent musical judges of my young days, who had heard both him and Paganini. They unhesitatingly gave the palm to Joachim, not because he was a greater technical player, but because he thought of his music first and of his public afterwards; while with Paganini the reverse was only too obvious. In one gift they found but little to choose between them, personal magnetism; though I gathered from them that they would have characterised the Italian's attraction as the more diabolically brilliant, and the

Joseph Joachim (1862).

Hungarian's as the more divinely intimate. They summed them up in the words 'Paganini for once, but Joachim for always.' The late Master of Trinity, Dr. Thompson, in criticising a young musical performer, put their opinion of Paganini in a neat epigrammatic form: '——'s playing always charms and *occasionally*—astonishes; and I may add that the less it astonishes, the more it charms.' This cultivated gibe could never have been applied to Joachim, and, curiously enough, Thompson, whose contempt (whether simulated or genuine) for the pursuit of music was expressed in his judgment of it as 'only a grade better than dancing,' was completely captivated by the personality and intellectual force of Joachim when he became an annual visitor to Cambridge.

Another quality which he possessed in a marked degree, exceeded, indeed, by no artist I have ever met, was veneration for the genius of other great men. This reverence, like his modesty, was innate. It was as evident in his attitude towards the masters of his own art as towards the great creators and inventors in other arts and sciences. Not that it was undiscriminating. He was big enough to grasp their points of weakness without unduly undervaluing their points of strength. But the reverence with which he approached anything savouring of criticism upon a great master was an earnest of its sincerity. The few who had the privilege on one occasion of hearing an almost Socratic discussion in Coutts Trotter's[1] rooms at Trinity (*anno* 1877) between him,

[1] Trotter was Joachim's nominal tutor when he entered his name on the books of Trinity College at the time of his Honorary Degree. After the

Robert Browning, and George Grove upon the later quartets of Beethoven (at the time still a subject of hot difference and argument) were impressed by this gift in a way which they can never forget. To some moderns who think that he was personally prejudiced in favour of the Schumann school, and who know the history of his defection from Weimar, it may come as a surprise that when I asked him whom he considered to be the greatest pianist he ever heard, he promptly replied, 'Liszt.' I witnessed the first meeting between him and Liszt after their separation in the 'fifties,' at the unveiling of the Bach Statue at Eisenach. It was a trying moment both for him and for the large crowd of musicians, who, for the most part, knew all the events; but the perfect combination of dignity, deference, and gentle grace with which he met his old colleague set everybody at their ease, most of all Liszt himself, that past-master of elegant finesse and courtierly tact. It was undoubtedly these qualities which lifted the standard of every performance with which he had to do, actively or passively, far above the ordinary level. His presence stimulated executants to do a little better than they thought they could, and listeners to understand a little more than they considered themselves capable of appreciating. It made one shiver miserably at the least sign of inferior taste, or of self-advertised and overrated accomplishment. It was these qualities which personally endeared him to a host of friends, undistinguished as well as famous; to Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Landseer, Leighton,

ceremony he saw Trotter, a large, bulky man, hurrying to his rooms, and said to me: 'Do look at my tutor trotting across the grass.'

Millais, Watts, Darwin, Gladstone, Jowett, Grove, to mention only a few of the great departed in England alone. To what proportions would this list grow if it included Europe? In the Elysian Fields he will not have to look far for friends.

And what a fund of humour he had! No one enjoyed a good joke more thoroughly, or remembered it more accurately. Lunching at the Savile Club one day, he dared me to guess whom he was mistaken for at a party in the same house, when it belonged to the late Lady Rosebery. I failed, for the answer was 'A Bishop,' Dr. Tait, then Bishop of London (at that time Joachim's magnificently massive jowl was not hidden by a beard). On one occasion I had a long and most interesting discussion with him about the position attained by Jews[1] in creating music (as distinct from performing it). He commented upon the curious fact that, while many like Spinoza and Heine had excelled in philosophy, literature, and science, music, which was one of their greatest gifts, did not possess one Jewish composer of the absolutely first rank, and he thought it possible that this was due to their lack of a native soil, and of a folk-music emanating from it. The same evening we went to a theatre, the late manager of which wished to be introduced to him. After greeting him, Joachim turned to me and whispered, with a twinkle in his eye: '*Not* a composer of the first rank.'

He was a strong politician,—in Germany a National Liberal, in England a Liberal Unionist. At one of his quartet evenings in Berlin, when Brahms' B flat quartet was produced for the first time, I sat near a

[1] He was by descent a pure Jew, and extremely proud of it.

most interesting person, who, he afterwards told me, was Lasker, the leader of his party, and an ardent lover of chamber music. His keenness at the time of the Home-rule Bill in 1886 could not have been exceeded by the most patriotic Britisher. At the Birmingham Festival of 1891 he was walking across to the Council House for luncheon when one of the party said: 'There is Chamberlain in front of us.' 'Oh, let me have a look at the other Joe,' said J. J. He had the knack of putting political points in a pithy, common-sense way. When I asked him in 1900 if he was a Pro-Boer, he said: 'I *was*; but I changed my views when I saw that they were ready and you were not.'

He was a stickler for accuracy, and for absolute purity of writing, down to the criticism of a single note. How often one has seen him take up a piece of new music, examine it under the left glass of his spectacles, and lay his finger on a questionable passage with the gentle query: 'Do you really like that?' He once quoted to me a sentence which Brahms wrote to Dvořák concerning a piece of slip-shod workmanship as a perfect summing-up of what a composer's ideal should be: 'We can write no more with such beauty as Mozart did; so let us try to write with as much purity.'[1] Joachim's own compositions were few, much too few, but they absolutely conformed to this principle. They are individual to a marked degree, and have not been without their influence even upon such a giant as Brahms. The G major Concerto is undoubtedly one of the greatest

[1] 'So schön wie Mozart können wir nicht mehr schreiben: versuchen wir also so rein zu schreiben.'

works of its class, and will be admitted to be so when the public are given the chance of knowing and of loving it. The overture to *Henry V.*, which delighted the huge audience at his jubilee in Queen's Hall, is astonishing in its anticipation of effects in the *Meistersinger*, a work eight years its junior. It was a special favourite of Brahms, who carried off the score in 1853 to arrange it for pianoforte duet. His orchestration was above proof, and remained throughout superior in freedom and more telling in effect than that of his famous friend, albeit designed on similar lines. As a conductor he was in one respect wholly admirable, the quality which Wagner places first amongst the virtues of a *chef d'orchestre*,—the intuitive grasp of the composer's tempo. But his beat was jerky and difficult to follow, and he was only at his best when in command of an orchestra which knew every turn of his wrist, such as that which he directed at the Schumann Festival at Bonn in 1873.

Few men retained their boyish characteristics so completely. I have it from the late Mr. Rockstro that he was the same Joachim in a frock-coat in the 'nineties' as he was in short jackets at Leipzig in the 'forties.' He told me that there were three of them always together—Joachim, Otto Goldschmidt, and himself—and that this trio used occasionally to become a quartet by the advent of a fourth brilliant boy who was studying law, which he used to lay down so dogmatically that Joseph and he sometimes nearly came to blows: whereupon Rockstro, the eldest of the party, had to act as general peacemaker. The occasional visitor was Hans von Bülow, and much as

they admired each other's genius, they always went on in the same way; Hans taking an impish delight in treading upon a tender toe, and Joseph just letting him go as far as he dared, but no farther. Their immense sense of humour, however, generally saved the situation.

He did not conceal his dislike of the latest developments of German music, not, however, without studying and listening to all its products; but his main indictment of it rested upon two allegations, which may be denied, but which the test of time alone will disprove,—rough and unfinished workmanship, and lack of genuine spontaneous invention. He did not deny the beauty of the millinery, but he questioned that of the body which it clothed. Of the workmanship he was a past-master, of the invention he was at any rate no negligible judge. For these views some have denied him a place amongst the progressists and the pioneers. Who are they who would deny the name of pioneer to the man who, before they were born, won the battle in Europe for Schubert and Schumann, for Dvořák and for Brahms? Pioneer he was, but he made sure of his base before he sallied out into new and unknown paths.

The natural gifts of Verdi appealed to him even in the days of *Traviatas* and *Ernanis*; when a musician once spoke to him of their 'vulgarity,' he rebuked him by insisting upon the genuine honesty which shone through them, long before *Otello* and *Falstaff* came to verify his criticism, developments which did not astonish him so much as they did the bulk of the musical world.

It is difficult to realise that this great figure—the

one man in Germany who solidly and consistently, through evil and good report, by example and by precept, upheld the traditions of the best and greatest, and accepted nothing which he thought of baser metal for the sake of a passing popularity—will be seen no more. If the generation to come must needs grow up in ignorance of how the C sharp minor Quartet of Beethoven can be made 'understanded of the people,' it must not be allowed to forget how the *Chaconne* of Bach came out of the dusty back volumes of an unplayable mathematical Bach to become the first ambitious effort of every rising violinist,[1] or how the Violin Concerto of Beethoven, deemed impossible for nearly twenty years after its composer's death, took its place as the greatest work of its class in existence. This, and much more also than this short paper can tell, did Joseph Joachim accomplish; and let it be added that, great as was his genius, sincere as was his modesty, and loyal as was his friendship, he had one gift more rare than all,—a large, true heart. Two sentences from letters written by men, neither of them musicians, and one of them personally unknown to him, seem a fitting close to these inadequate lines:—'It is good to have known such a man, to have felt the touch of his hand, seen the smile on his face, and heard the sound of his voice, all apart from the violin.' And: 'He has left the world the poorer, save for his example.'

[1] Joseph Robinson once said to me: 'Joachim is the only violinist who *brings flames out of his violin.*' The scale-passage in the *Chaconne* will recall the truth of this picturesque remark.

CRITICAL STUDIES

HUBERT PARRY'S *JUDITH*

(1888)

READERS of that excellent and most useful author, Mr. Karl Baedeker, will remember the stress which he lays on an important Italian proverb, *Chi va piano, va sano, chi va sano, va lontano.* What he tenders as advice to mountaineers may be applied with equal force to artists. A better example of obedience to the proverb, and of consequent success, could scarcely be named than the composer under consideration. His career has been one of hard work and of few opportunities; nor have the difficulties in his path been lessened by the fact that not one of the powers that preside over the discovery and encouragement of rising composers has given him a helping hand. The greatest of modern musical critics, Robert Schumann, used his opportunities mainly for the purpose of seeing what was good and new in contemporary work. The principal portion of the musical press in England, instead of seeking for merit, more often hunts for faults, and not infrequently manufactures them for the pleasure of descanting on the dark side of the picture.[1] A strong feeling for national music, which has come to a head during recent years, might have been

[1] *Tempora mutantur.* The young man of 1908 finds the road far smoother than it was twenty years ago.

expected to produce at all events one good result, the encouragement of those native composers who endeavour to work on the highest lines and to place this country in the running with the more earnest Continental schools. Unfortunately this is not the case. Any writer who is bold enough to take a higher flight than the royalty ballad and the comic opera finds that an utter lack of appreciation, to use the mildest term, is the only recompense of his laudable endeavour; and unless he be strong-minded enough to rate criticism at its proper value, not only in theory but in practice, discouragement and failure are the inevitable result. However, the outcome of this deplorable battle of author and critic is probably, in all branches of creative work, the survival of the fittest. A man, conscious of his power and reliant on his own abilities, will be spurred on by the very fact that his efforts are not appreciated at their proper value. Moreover, one who has the discrimination to separate the chaff from the grain in the judgment of his critics, will gain some profit for himself, even where such a gratuitous advantage was not intended. Such men produce the work which is noblest in the annals of a country; and unless human judgment is unusually erring in this instance, Mr. Parry is such a man.

Now that his new oratorio has made its mark, contemporary criticism will perchance begin to see that the blunder is not in his having the temerity to write music, but in their valuation of his previous works. Mere dismissal of them as the sowing of wild oats, and such-like similes, easy to write and to print but hard to substantiate, will not suffice to

keep them from the consideration of musicians; and, it may be at once admitted that they are of a character not to be easily grasped and treated in an ephemeral criticism on the basis of a single hearing. Mr. Parry has not gone to seek for popularity, and popularity, unlike the proverbial mountain in its relations with Mahomet, will have to come to him. If the present generation does not take the step, it is the loss of the present generation. Regarding his latest work glib compliments are made to him about his condescension in coming down from the heights of transcendentalism to the comprehension of ordinary men. A little more thought on the way in which an artist works out his own development, and a little more knowledge of Mr. Parry's previous creations, would demonstrate that there is no such condescension, but merely the natural sequence of events. Richness of ideas involves complexity of treatment until the mind is sufficiently schooled by experience to turn complexity into simplicity, as Mozart did. The boundaries are narrow at first, and the ideas cramped for room; the enlargement of them gives the ideas space to move. It would seem that ordinary English criticism, which so lightly sneers at transcendentalism, and applauds simplicity, would prefer poverty of ideas while the mind was undeveloped, and expect richness of ideas when it was grown. This is to expect an infant monkey of some imitative ability to grow into a Talma. It was in his ability to discern richness of ideas when still confined in narrow limits, that Schumann established his claim to critical power of the first rank. It is the lack of this ability that unfortunately

renders so much of contemporary professional criticism worthless from an artist's point of view. Another tendency even more dangerous to the young writer is the stereotyped habit of accusing him of plagiarism at the outset of his career. By plagiarism is meant, not, as we were brought up to think, deliberate literary stealing, but imitation, generally unconscious, of composers who have preceded him. What can be more mischievous than such a charge as this? Not one great composer, not one great sculptor or painter, has ever brought the world to his feet, who has not laid his foundations on the work already done by the best of his predecessors. The laws of evolution are as true in music as in the other arts; composers do not, as a rule, spring ready-made out of the head of Jupiter; if they do, it is because they have already absorbed what is best in Jupiter's brains. Bach without Schütz and Buxtehude, Beethoven without Haydn and Mozart, Wagner without Gluck and Weber—the instances are countless and incontrovertible—would have been impossibilities. Moreover, it can only be by continuous acquaintance with and study of a contemporary master that it is possible to trace and identify his individuality—his power, that is, of treating and developing in his own method the legacies which his predecessors have left him. A young composer who showed in his music no signs of his acquaintance with composers of the past would certainly leave no personalty for his heirs. He would be an unhealthy because an unnatural phenomenon. But of the healthy kind of plagiarism, which is the best proof of genuine individuality, Mr. Parry's oratorio is an admirable

example. To any one sufficiently acquainted with his earlier work, his hand is obvious in every page; but it is equally easy to see that he did not set to work upon an oratorio without absorbing what was best in the masters who had preceded him. Not the least remarkable feature in the work is its distinctly English, national atmosphere, which gives it a value to this country far greater than the present generation need be expected to admit. It is easy to see the legitimate influence (not plagiarism, *messieurs les censeurs*) of Boyce, as for instance in the *alla capella* passage, 'Jerusalem, that was queen of the nations, is brought low'; and of S. S. Wesley in the soprano solo, 'Though into the valley of the shadow of death.' It adds to our interest in the local development of an English school to see the work of Wesley, despite his cramped opportunities and his comparatively narrow experience, bearing fruit in a composer of the first rank in the generation following: a sufficient proof, if proof were needed, that even in its least assertive days our national taste in music was alive and not permanently or deeply injured by foreign influence. Nor is it only in the oratorio under consideration that Mr. Parry shows the results of Wesley's influence. In his choral setting of Milton's ode, 'Blest pair of Sirens,' it is still more apparent, although the ability is greater, and the workmanship finer than his predecessor could have manifested. Having reaped the fruits, then, of his experience in the best schools of English and foreign work, Mr. Parry now presents us with an example of the highest form of musical composition.

In approaching its consideration, the first point to be noted is that it is dramatically, poetically, and musically the work of one hand. The libretto has obviously grown up almost side by side with the music to which it is wedded. This singleness of authorship is not in this instance accompanied by its usual drawbacks. Too often, when a composer is his own librettist, his divided interest is destructive of his cool judgment. The librettist is no critic of the composer's flights, and the composer is too tender and self-complacent to apply the scissors to the librettist's work, and the consequence is not infrequently a lack of balance and of compression in the treatment. Mr. Parry is obviously a severe critic of himself, and the result is a book which, whatever its other shortcomings, cannot be charged with undue lengthening in its dramatic portions. The story is interesting in itself and pithy in its treatment, involving several opportunities for purely lyrical handling without any marked strain upon the dramatic situations. Moreover, by ingenious and deft management, the purely reflective element, which is at times so disturbing and irrelevant in oratorio books, is worked into the general scenario without checking the action. The language is partly from the Bible, partly in prose which so nearly resembles Biblical English that it would tax many a theologian's perceptive power to decide where the Bible leaves off and Mr. Parry begins, partly in direct and simple but thoroughly musical verse. The 'Ballad of the Children of Israel,' which the Queen-mother sings to her children, is in itself a child's poem of no ordinary merit, and sums up the early Israelitish

history in four verses which would do credit to Mrs. Alexander at her best.

The story upon which the book of words is based is comparatively simple but highly dramatic. The priests of Moloch demand as a sacrifice the children of King Manasseh, who weakly yields them in an access of fanaticism. Nemesis comes in the form of the Assyrians, who sack Jerusalem and carry the king into captivity. One figure of hope remains, that of Judith, who alone has the courage to stand between the children and their immolators, but without success. Manasseh repents and returns from bondage to Jerusalem, now shattered and defenceless. The Assyrians once more beset the city, and demand its surrender unless it conforms to the worship of their deities. Judith rescues it by her well-known exploit, and the enemy, now without a leader, is put to flight. The central psychological figure in this story is of course Manasseh, a weak character, but that very fact gives an impetus to the action. His personality is no doubt unsympathetic, and he is, as far as can be in the story, the villain of the piece; not, however, an irreclaimable villain. Therein lies the interest of the drama. He is beset by two forces, the one evil in the form of fanaticism, the other good in the form of Judith. His weak submission to the former brings the catastrophe in the first act; his repentance and reliance upon Judith brings the rescue in the second. The fact that Judith represents the embodiment of heroism and rectitude appears at first sight to make her the central figure of the action, but it is only her character and sentiments which produce this effect; in

order to appreciate the construction of the story we must take Manasseh to be the corner-stone of the building. The first and most obvious omission from the tale of characters is that of Holofernes. The scene, in which Zolaism would have revelled, and which the librettist of *Hérodiade* would, no doubt, have made the turning-point in the drama, is omitted altogether; not so, however, the sensation of its taking place. Mr. Parry rightly avoids the slaughter *coram populo*, and is thus faithful to the best traditions of Greek art. He places the scene on the walls of Jerusalem, on which the watchmen are awaiting Judith's return. The music is calm, and the picture of a moonlit landscape complete; but the suggestion of the deed is the more subtle and striking by the very contrast. A parallel might be found in the last act of *Carmen*, where Don José stabs his mistress outside the arena, to the strains, not of the tragedy without, but of the noisy revelry within. When Judith arrives with the gory trophy in her hands amid the growing excitement of the Jews, and shouts her triumph from outside the walls, the effect is tenfold enhanced by the omission of a realistic episode revolting in itself and foreign to the healthier traditions of oratorio. It has been said that Mr. Parry has shown that courage which is the better part of valour in running away from this scene, and that the story of Judith without Holofernes is that of *Hamlet* with the omission of the Prince of Denmark. It may well be answered that Holofernes is in no sense the central figure, but only a unit in the forces of evil, the parallel of Hamlet being therefore no parallel at all. A song of triumph for Manasseh which follows

this scene has been with equal thoughtlessness described as unnecessary and redundant, although to any one who reads the book with moderate care it will be obvious that it is dramatically necessary, for it tells the tale of Judith's exploit, which has been omitted in action, and without it the story would be incomplete. The fact that most of the audience are acquainted with the exploit of Judith does not justify the dramatist in omitting its description when he is prevented from portraying the scene itself. We may expect, therefore, that in the interests of the sequence of the drama Mr. Parry will class the suggestion to omit this song amongst the chaff and not the grain of criticism. It will be seen that the story has all the elements which go to awake interest and retain it, save the one weak point, the vacillating and unsympathetic central figure. In this respect, however, the author is in good company. If Manasseh has not the philosophy or dialectic of Faust, he at any rate does not bind himself so closely to the devil.

From the consideration of the story as a whole we may now turn to its scenic treatment and its musical illustration. The first scene, entitled 'Moloch,' at once lands us in the centre of the action. The people are worshipping the idol in mingled accents of the deepest gloom and the wildest fanaticism, even praising it for destroying the children of the land. Manasseh proclaims that a yet higher sacrifice than any which has been made is needed to avert the wrath of Moloch. The high priest in return demands the children of the King himself. The multitude acclaim him as an especially honoured worshipper; the King is stunned and horror-stricken,

but is forced by the commands of the priests and the tumult of the people to acquiesce silently in the sacrifice. The musical treatment of this stirring scene is highly picturesque and varied. Mr. Parry's strong point is a mastery of polyphony, and the phrase which permeates the worship of Moloch is thoroughly suitable to the sombre colouring of the situation. The choral writing is both new and effective. The voices are used with great independence and the utterances of the priest are most characteristic. A notable instance is the undercurrent of persistent force with which they accompany in unison the laments of the King for his children's approaching fate. The scene terminates with a masterly fugue, which is musically interesting as well as technically powerful. At its climax a short pause occurs, the high priest pronounces the final doom of the children, and the chorus break into a shout of triumph. The construction of this short ending on a recurring bass of two bars is most ingenious, and recalls slightly a similar effect in the march of the first act of Schumann's *Genoveva*. The effect in both instances is equally striking and legitimate: it adds to the general feeling of dramatic persistence which permeates the movement.

The next scene is a strong contrast to its predecessor. The characters before us are the Queen-mother Meshullemeth and the two doomed children, all as yet unconscious of the fate at hand. The whole is quiet and peaceful in the extreme; the ballad sung by the mother to which allusion is made above is a model of simplicity and charm. This short episode closes with a brief prayer for the three voices,

the composition of which shows a slight falling off from the previous standard of originality. The calm is broken in upon by the entry of the priests of Moloch, persistent and gloomy as before, who demand the presence of the children by order of the King. A singularly touching point is made, where the child pleads against its mother's suspicions and avers its belief in its father's care. The Moloch theme rises to a quasi-climax, as the children are led off and the footfall of the priests dies away. The situation is one of almost excessive horror, but it is rescued by the introduction of the heroine, Judith, who exhorts the Queen to faith and hope. In this most impressive solo the composer has surprisingly succeeded in riveting the interest. The situation is against him, for the centre of the story is again removed to the worship of Moloch. Moreover, although Mr. Parry has distinguished both the idolaters and the children by a characteristic delineation which makes them unmistakable, it does not appear at first sight that he has been equally definite with the figure of Judith. Musically, melodiously, and constructively interesting as it is, this song does not suggest the mixture of masculine force with feminine grace which distinguishes her personality. It may be that the composer has intended to develop her character with the course of the story, but the story is too short for such subtlety, and the feeling of the dramatic listener is as yet unsatisfied. Her later utterances are drawn in far more deep and strong lines, and produce a correspondingly sharper outline and clearer expression. In the following scene of the sacrifice, Mr. Parry has been graphic

without excess of realism, and graceful without suggestion of staginess. In the dances round the victims he has not yielded to the fascinations of the ballet, and recalls rather the Acropolis than the Boulevard des Capucines. His own phrase of 'low-breath'd reverent song' is the key to the treatment. The priests persist in their gloomy utterances, which are relieved in turn by the half-hearted prayers of the King and the grace of the processional dance. As the sacrifice is about to be consummated, Judith appears, this time portrayed with no lack of force and vigour. She calls on the King to cease from the horrible rite, and foretells in the most stirring and exciting strains the destruction of the city. The figure of this Jewish Cassandra is now a living reality and a directing force in the drama. As the mob howl for her massacre beside the children, her prophecy is fulfilled. A messenger arrives to announce the approach of a vast army of Assyrians, a shock which for the moment recalls the King to his senses, for he addresses his people in terms of encouragement, and foretells their victory by the power of Moloch. This *dénouement* is devised in such a way that Mr. Parry is able to leave the fate of the children to the imagination. Like a practised playwright, he conceals their disappearance by diverting the interest. This judicious reticence is an interesting example of the same obedience to the best principles of the Greek tragedy as is shown by the omission of the scene with Holofernes.

The finale of the act opens with three characteristic utterances in strong contrast to each other. The people express their dread: 'The host of Assur is

like a swarm of locusts, the land may not be seen for the multitude of them'; the priests, their misplaced faith: 'The wrath of Moloch is like a mighty whirlwind; he shall but breathe on them, and they shall be no more'; Judith, her righteous sentence of destruction: 'Jerusalem was loved of the Lord as a spouse is loved of her husband; but she betrayed Him, and now shall the vengeance of her God be accomplished.' As she speaks the vengeance comes, the Assyrian host attacks, and the city is laid in ruins. The whole movement is worked out with consummate ability. The litany to Moloch, the battle, and most of all the magnificent quiet climax when the fight is over and the city destroyed, 'Jerusalem, that was queen of the nations, is brought low,' form a series of frescoes which are alike dignified and vivid. Neither in musicianship nor in richness of ideas has this section been surpassed by any English composer.

After this exciting scene an anti-climax is unavoidable. Mr. Parry has a difficulty to face, inasmuch as his main place of action must remain in Jerusalem, and a buffer must be provided between the scene of mourning and the scene of battle. The method he has chosen is to introduce an *intermezzo* called the Repentance of Manasseh at Babylon. The form is that of a prayer cast in a polyphonic mould, and recalling in its treatment the style of Sebastian Bach. The movement could scarcely, under the best conditions, be a striking success, but as it is the hearer is left somewhat cold and unimpressed. Here the composer has suffered from the unsympathetic character of the King. He has done

nothing hitherto to claim even much pity, and consequently his repentance is a matter of indifference. The piece, however, does its duty as a necessary foil to the preceding and succeeding scenes.

The second act opens with a wailing of the Jews for their destroyed city and their captive King. The music very happily gives a feeling of affinity to the utterances in the first act, but it is expressive of the same character with the fanaticism purged away. The people are comforted by the Queen, who tells them that their King is set free and is returning; his approach is hailed by a most exciting and brilliant chorus, all the more welcome as it is the first thoroughly joyous number in the oratorio. The sparkling symphony at its close shows the composer in his most characteristic vein, and recalls his masterly music to the *Birds* of Aristophanes. The following solo and trio for Manasseh, Judith, and the Queen recurs a little to the more indefinite style of Judith's first song. It would seem as if triple measure had this effect on Mr. Parry's pen. He is at his best when he is in less 'softly sweet' measures. None the less is it a pleasure to hear a genuine trio for three solo voices, in these days when dramatic usage and realism is tending to the minimising of concerted vocal music. It would seem as if modern oratorio of the received stamp restricted it to the inevitable solo quartet. But of this mawkish abomination, which has now got into such a groove as to be positively offensive, Mr. Parry has given us no example. If it were for this merit of omission alone, we should be thankful for his oratorio.

The scene of rejoicing is rudely interrupted by

the message of Holofernes, conveyed in powerful and rhythmical phrases, demanding the acceptance of Assyrian worship or the surrender of the city. For this opportunity the city mourns, but Judith gives thanks. She announces her bold scheme, and departs amid the shouts of the Israelites. In this as in the succeeding choruses the composer shows how well he can write a fugue and carry it through; a task which presents apparently such insuperable obstacles to many oratorio writers, that they content themselves with the exposition more or less grandiloquently expressed and then hastily retire under cover of their batteries of harps and trumpets. To the illustration of the scene of Judith's exploit we have alluded above. The treatment is quiet and picturesque. The moon lights the plain, as the watchmen patrol the walls and the King sings to his harp. At last the heroine is seen approaching, the excitement grows, and her voice is heard without the gates in a shout of triumph. The scene closes with a chorus of victory which is the finest number in the work, both from the point of view of choral writing and of musical effect. The last six pages are rousing and powerful in the extreme; the passage of contrary motion between voices and orchestra is quite new and proportionately impressive. The whole moves on with irresistible go and fire up to the last chord. To this succeeds the triumphal song of Manasseh, 'God breaketh the battle,' which has been described as dramatically unnecessary, too Handelian, and a mere vocal exercise. To one and all of these criticisms we throw down the glove. It is dramatically necessary, for

otherwise the manner of Judith's deed would be untold; it is not Handelian, but rather a modernised version of the early Italian type of which Alessandro Scarlatti is the foremost example; to the Handelian form or manner it has no more marked kinship than the music of Pergolesi has to that of Haydn; to describe it as a vocal exercise is to show ignorance of its contents. It no more follows that a song which has florid passages need be devoid of musical interest, than that a violin concerto must be uninteresting because it is brilliantly written for the instrument. It is the very fact of Mr. Parry having united brilliancy with musical interest and appropriate declamation which makes this song a veritable *tour de force*. The colour is antique, but the manipulation is modern. It is a unique specimen of its kind, and even as an experiment it would be interesting if it did not command admiration by its success. The passage descriptive of the slaying of Holofernes is a piece of graphic delineation of the first order. A glance, moreover, at the construction of the act will show that a bold and unusual stroke was necessary at this point in order to save the close from the danger of an anti-climax. The finale of the work is the least interesting movement of all. It is to our mind unduly spun out, and the musical interest is not equal to that of the former choral numbers. The composer obviously feels that the dramatic interest is over, and that the short ending permissible and advantageous in opera would be welcome. *Judith* shares this drawback with many another oratorio which has enjoyed a long lease of life and great reputation.

It is with regret that we close the task of studying and criticising this excellent work. Its freshness, clearness, and directness will hit the public taste more and more every time it is brought to a hearing. It is a proof that conscientious devotion to the highest branches of art will bring its reward of success; slower, perhaps, than in the case of those who begin their career by catching the popular ear, but surer of a long fruition in the end. Such a work is an encouragement to Mr. Parry's successors, a source of pride to his contemporaries, and a tribute to his predecessors. It is the offspring not only of a finished musician but of a cultivated thinker. For such a possession art is the better and England the richer.

SULLIVAN'S *GOLDEN LEGEND*

(1886)

Among the many novelties of importance performed for the first time at the Leeds Festival last month, a place of honour is on all sides awarded to the latest work of Sir Arthur Sullivan. Awaited with an impatience which betokened good hopes, not perhaps untinged by anxiety, it has succeeded in transcending the best wishes and anticipations of the entire musical world. It would be scarcely too much to prophesy that a place, not only amongst the permanent successes of our generation, but even in the shelves of the classics, is ready for this masterly composition of the English school. The *Golden Legend* of Longfellow, from which the libretto is selected, has inspired our fellow-countryman to write a work which, for earnestness of purpose and refinement of expression, realises all the promises held out so temptingly by his early cantatas, the *Tempest* music and *Kenilworth*. The subject is undoubtedly a fascinating one, simple in idea and picturesque in its poetical treatment, lending itself at every turn to musical expression, and capable of gaining from association with the sister art much of the vigour which its diction otherwise lacks. Although Longfellow's work may not be of the strongest, his rhythms adapt themselves admirably to musical treatment,

and there runs throughout the poem a vein of tenderness and humanity which goes far to compensate for lack of virility and force. The story of the maiden who is willing to sacrifice her life to save that of a fellow-creature, and whose influence is combated by an embodiment of the powers of evil only to gain a more conspicuous triumph by their defeat, has formed, under various disguises and in divers tongues, the basis of many a poem and tale; it seems, however, to bear the charm of perpetual youth, and to confer success upon those who deal with it either from a lyrical or a dramatic standpoint. For the purposes of Sullivan's cantata, the characters, which in Longfellow's poem are both numerous and ill-connected, have been reduced to four, and those the most characteristic in the poem. The figure of Elsie, the heroine of the drama, is undoubtedly the best realised, inasmuch as it is the tenderest in expression and the most reflective of the nature of the poet. Scarcely less characteristic is the personality of the mother, Ursula, whose matter-of-fact and homely piety is, from the necessary compression of the poem for musical purposes, not so graphically treated in the cantata as in the original drama. On the other hand, the characters of Prince Henry of Hoheneck and of Lucifer are far less satisfactory. The former is both colourless and weak, and from the construction of the poem loses all the sympathies of the reader until close upon the end of the action. The latter has been so obviously suggested by close study of Goethe's *Faust* that a comparison is suggested by almost every scene, and the character is not unnaturally overshadowed by the great original. How

far Sir Arthur Sullivan has succeeded in retrieving Longfellow's failure in these two important figures of his cantata I shall consider later on.

To select from a lyrical poem of long and, it must be added, rambling dimensions matter sufficiently concentrated to tell the story clearly without sacrificing the best of the poetry, or mutilating the design of the action, was undoubtedly a matter of no ordinary difficulty. The dangers and pitfalls which lurk to catch the adapter have been very successfully avoided by Mr. Joseph Bennett, who, if anything, has erred on the side of over-compression. The arrangement of the libretto deserves in itself a short consideration. Longfellow's Prologue, describing the attempt of Lucifer and the spirits of the storm to destroy the spire of Strasburg Cathedral and their defeat by the bells, is left intact. It serves a double purpose, that of an interesting and picturesque opening, and of a suggestion of the defeat suffered by the powers of evil in the story which follows. The action proper is divided into six scenes. In the first Prince Henry is discovered, ill and restless in mind and body, praying for the rest and sleep which has deserted him. To him enters, Mephistopheles-fashion, Lucifer in physician's garb, who asks him his ailment, and offers to cure it. The Prince hands him a scroll, upon which is written the only cure that will avail:—

> The only remedy that remains
> Is the blood that flows from a maiden's veins,
> Who of her own free will shall die,
> And give her life as the price of yours.

Lucifer reads, and mockingly derides such a far-

fetched panacea. He lures him on with many wiles to taste—

> The Elixir of Perpetual Youth,
> Called Alcohol, in the Arab speech;

and the Prince, yielding to the temptation and sinking under its spell, falls dreaming on his couch, while angels mourn his weakness. Mr. Bennett has here, in my opinion, omitted one most important point in the poem. He closes the scene with the Prince's ejaculations of ecstasy and delirium; whereas Longfellow, with a subtle touch of character, introduces almost at the climax a return of the longing for rest and sleep with which the scene began. By this means the passing nature of the relief and the bitterness to come is admirably indicated, and the omission of the lines leaves the hearer under a false impression. Moreover, an adherence to Longfellow's plan would have given additional unity to the scene without unduly lengthening it, and would have rewarded the hearer by a repetition of one of the most charming pages in Sullivan's score. The second scene describes the home of Elsie, and her resolution to die for the Prince. The ready acceptance on his part of the sacrifice is undoubtedly a blot on the story from a dramatic point of view, which cannot, however, be laid to the account of the adapter; nor, indeed, would it have been possible to amend the situation without an entire reconstruction of the poem. All dramatic interest in the Prince is, however, annihilated from this point to the fourth scene, and it must have been a task of no ordinary difficulty for the composer to restore, as he has done, a musical interest to the

utterances of his hero. The other difficulty in this scene, namely, the suddenness of Elsie's resolve to sacrifice herself before the listener has fairly had time to grasp the nature of her character, might have been surmounted with great ease, and, moreover, with great advantage to the composer. An excerpt from the third scene of Longfellow's poem, the garden of the farm in the Odenwald, would have supplied the deficiency, and given the cue to the character of the heroine. Moreover, the fascinating lyric which she sings to the Prince, the 'Legend of the Sultan's daughter and the Master of the Flowers,' would have inspired Sullivan with one of his most characteristic efforts. It would have been, if the comparison is not too far-fetched, the scherzo or intermezzo of his symphony. The third scene describes the journey of the Prince and Elsie to Salerno, and their meeting with a band of pilgrims, amongst whom is Lucifer, mocking and triumphant, on his way to meet them at their journey's end, and to complete the tragedy. The fourth scene embodies the climax of the story, the self-sacrifice of Elsie and her rescue by the Prince when he first awakes to the horror of her loss. The miracle, however, is accomplished, and the sufferer is healed. The fifth and sixth scenes tell of the joy of Elsie's mother at her rescue, and of the love and marriage of the Prince and his rescuer. The book closes with a short epilogue chosen from the longer one of Longfellow, which gives occasion for a reflective chorus expressing the grandeur and undying fame of the golden deed. It may be questioned whether this section has not also been over-compressed. It would not have been difficult to include the fine lines

suggesting the defeat of Lucifer, which form so effective a parallel to the Prologue. Such a course would naturally have involved a more extended and developed finale, but the work could well have borne such an addition, and the unity of the story would have been still more complete. Having so far discussed the construction of the book, it will suffice to add that the general interest of the story is admirably sustained, and that, in spite of some weaknesses in detail, it contains enough human feeling and good poetry to ensure a favourable predisposition on the part of the listener. It would be safe to predict a good measure of vitality to any musical work which worthily illustrated the story and characterised the actors. How far Sir Arthur Sullivan has answered to the call upon him, it is now my intention to discuss.

It may at once be conceded that if the years intervening since the production of the *Tempest* music in 1862 and the cantata of *Kenilworth* at the Birmingham Festival of 1864 had been obliterated from the composer's musical life, the musical world would have welcomed the *Golden Legend* as a natural sequel and a genuine artistic advance upon his two admirable early works. But it is possible to go a considerable step farther, and to acknowledge it a work fully worthy of his maturity. The case is undoubtedly a peculiar one. After winning his spurs with ease by the production of these two cantatas, Sir Arthur Sullivan turned his attention principally to a class of composition which, if always showing in unmistakable clearness the stamp of the musician's hand, was of a standard of art distinctly below the level of his

abilities. If the world of music has to thank him for a purification of the operetta stage—no mean service in itself—it may still be permitted to regret that this much-needed reform was not carried out by a brain of smaller calibre and a hand less capable of higher work. Of the reasons which prompted such a decision it is outside the province of the contemporary critic to speak hastily or harshly. The most unbiassed judge would be the Mendelssohn Scholar of 1860 and the composer of the *Golden Legend* of 1886. It would, however, be only natural to expect that, after so many years spent in lighter work, some diminution would be apparent in the power of creating and sustaining a masterpiece of the high standard which the composer had so long left untouched. Nor was the production of the *Martyr of Antioch*, picturesque though it was in treatment, likely to encourage the hopes of those who wished for greater things from his pen. At this point of Sullivan's career it is not without significance that two such widely different writers as Sir George Macfarren and Dr. Eduard Hanslick should have described him as the Offenbach of England; no bad compliment to his cleverness or versatility, but prompted by a desire, in the one case, probably, to veil a disappointment, and in the other, undoubtedly, to point a satire. Suddenly the situation changes. The *Golden Legend* is produced and raises Sullivan's reputation at a stroke to the point which it might reasonably have been expected to have reached, if the intervening years had been spent upon the most earnest and serious development of the promise of his earlier work. It restores him to his legitimate position as one of the leaders of the

English school, and, inasmuch as the genuine success of his last composition will have made a return to less elevated forms of the art a matter of difficulty, if not of impossibility, the musical world may be led to hope for a series of lasting treasures from his genius. The politician once appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot return to the position of greater freedom and less responsibility afforded by the leadership of the Fourth Party. The composer of the *Golden Legend* must now give posterity the chance of enjoying the fruits of his genius, and stay his hand from works which, however refined and musicianly, must of their very nature and surroundings be ephemeral, and pass away with the fashion which gave them birth. His powers as a creative musician and his position in the musical world alike demand his progression in the direction indicated by his latest production.

The score of the cantata abounds in beauties of the highest order: it is characteristic, sympathetic, poetical, and full of that intangible quality which, for lack of a better word, may best be termed style. The most difficult character, that of Lucifer, is treated with great originality; and by a development of the satirical pedantry of the figure, and a happy avoidance of conventional devil-music, strengthens the poem of Longfellow in its weakest point. The instrumentation throughout is masterly, and, what is more rare in these days of advanced orchestral treatment, new. The vocal writing is admirable, the choral numbers designed with the greatest knowledge of broad effects. It is, of course, as impossible as it would be undesirable to expect that Sullivan's work should be uninfluenced both by recent music and by the

earlier masters whom he has studied and loved. It is easy to see that Schubert is an especial favourite with him; many of the figures and means of expression are the result of his influence, and the composer bids his musical farewell to his chief characters with a phrase pleasantly suggestive of the song *Am Meer* of the great Viennese, as if he could not resist a parting greeting to the master, so many of whose works he helped to restore to the world. Wagner and Berlioz too have had their effect; the former in the colour of the Prologue, in the scene of the temptation by Alcohol, and in a pleasant whiff of the *Meistersinger* which now and then pervades the counterpoint of the accompaniments; the latter in the impressive solo 'It is the sea,' and, speaking technically, in the treatment of the lower registers of the wood and brass instruments. The influence of Gounod and of Mendelssohn is less apparent than in any of Sullivan's previous works. But I quote these instances not in reproach, but rather in satisfaction. No originality worthy of the name exists, which is not founded upon the results attained by those who have worked before. The majority of present-day critics, in all branches of art, seem to think it part of their duty to decry as plagiarism all reflection, however dim, of the style of a past master. The earlier days of Schubert, and still more of Beethoven himself, would have been a rich harvest for these reminiscence-hunters. But in music, as in painting and in sculpture, originality will not spring up like a fungus, but form itself as a natural and healthy growth upon the experience and knowledge gained and taught by the great composers who have passed

away. Of this healthy form of originality the *Golden Legend* has abundance to show, for, with all its proofs that the writer has studied in the best schools and kept pace with many of the best points of modern advance, the whole composition has an atmosphere which is distinctly its own, and which at once stamps its author as a master of his craft.

It is tempting to consider passingly some of the musical features of each scene. From the very first notes of the bells, the Prologue is instinct with power and descriptive force. The somewhat stereotyped formula which a musical portrayal of storm seems to demand is in this instance both relieved and rejuvenated by the cry of the spirits, 'O we cannot,' and the contrast and ponderous rhythm of the voices of the bells. Especially effective and well-designed is the final triumphant peal after the defeat of Lucifer and the storm-fiends. That Sullivan knows how to get the best effect from his organ and choir at the close need not be insisted upon. The orchestral introduction of the first scene is equally powerful in rhythmical treatment, and the succeeding short scena for Prince Henry, to which allusion has been previously made, is of singular charm and simplicity. The duet between Lucifer and the Prince gives occasion for varied and subtle characterisation, of which ample use has been made. The pedantic and cynical figure which accompanies Lucifer throughout the work, the simple but very effective theme representative of the maiden's self-sacrifice, the picturesque orchestration of the temptation (in which so novel a use is made of the harmonics of the violins), and the melodiousness and clearly-worked elaboration of

the close of the scene call for the admiration of the listener, and sustain his interest throughout. Especially charming in its quiet feeling is the introduction of the second scene, and the short song of Ursula. The following hymn, 'O gladsome light,' is highly effective, and (with the exception of the coda 'Now to the sunset,' which is out of character with the design and of a less distinguished expression) a model of good part-writing. The prayer of Elsie, if somewhat suggestive of Meyerbeer in the treatment of the opening bars, soon gains the hearer's sympathy, and the climax is of great beauty and charming workmanship. In the third scene occur some of the most striking and exciting pages in the score. After a quiet and somewhat Schubert-like opening, the pilgrim's chant, a plain-song of sombre colouring, gradually grows in force upon the ear, accompanied, and even almost parodied, by the cynical voice of Lucifer in their midst. A climax of great force is reached, which would have sorely tempted a less experienced composer to bring his scene to a close. It is no small praise to say that, in spite of the height of interest attained at this point, no feeling of weariness or anti-climax is experienced in the many pages which follow. The soliloquies of the Prince and of Elsie as they gaze at the sea, and the concluding solo and chorus, form a chain of passing pictures which rivet the attention to the finish. The scene at Salerno is of less musical interest, with the exception of the very original close, where the shouts, short and sharp, of the chorus produce an effect at once startling and legitimate. Very happy too is the orchestral coda, with its reminiscence of Prince

Henry's restless misery at the opening of the first scene, and the suggestion of his final cure. The spirit of Schubert again smiles at us in the opening of the fifth scene, and the dialogue which follows is clearly characterised and carried on with interest. The song of Ursula which follows calls for no very special remark. Sir Arthur Sullivan, with the wisdom born of experience, has kept his best until the last. The duet between the Prince and Elsie, which forms the sixth and concluding scene, is beyond a doubt the gem of the whole. Like the charming duet in *Kenilworth*, 'How sweet the moonlight sits upon this bank,' the subject-matter of the dialogue consists of parallels and analogies drawn from the legends of olden time, and the result, as in the case of the earlier work, has been a conspicuous success. The quiet and solemn figure which accompanies the recital of the legend of Charlemagne is full of an impressiveness at once touching and poetical, while the close of the scene is as simple as it is refined. Of the finale it is not easy to speak in terms of such unqualified praise. Its effect is undeniably great, and the manner in which the climax is prepared and enunciated is of undoubted cleverness, and will invariably call forth the loudest applause of the public. Whether, however, that result is attained by the same legitimate and thoroughly artistic means as are apparent in almost every previous page in the score, I take leave to doubt. The melody is broad and developed, I admit; the fugue is, as far as it is worked out, smooth and clear; the finale grandiose and full of sonority; and still I venture to think that the composer could have

written a more distinguished melody with more distinguished harmonies to accompany it, and that if his design was for a *monophonic* close, he would have done more wisely to avoid the desire for polyphony which his introduction of a fugue creates. The mixture of styles seems to damage the design. The *Golden Legend* deserves an Epilogue, which, like the deed it commemorates, should 'burn and shine in characters of gold.' It should not need the artificial fire of calculated effects to keep it alight. The merits of this movement will be a matter of varied opinion; and those who place the highest value on the earlier parts of the cantata will probably, for the present, come off second best in the discussion, inasmuch as the treatment of the finale will have been justified in the eyes of the public by success.

The production of this masterly work has been received by a chorus of approval on the part of the public, of the press, and of the musicians. With regard to the enthusiasm of the first we have no doubt as to its genuineness or its lasting effect. The *Golden Legend* will, by a long and prosperous career, furnish one more proof that a simple and interesting story, appealing to the best side of human nature, and told in good language, will, if wedded to music worthy of it, make a lasting mark, and have an elevating influence. It is equally easy to understand the almost too undiscriminating praises lavished upon it by the press. It is natural, nay more, it is right, that in the Paradise of Music, as in other Paradises, there should be more rejoicing over Sullivan's great and legitimate success, than over the works of the ninety and nine just composers who

have remained uninfluenced (perhaps because untempted) by considerations of profit and popularity. For the musicians it only remains to be thankful for the addition of one more valuable treasure to the literature of their art, and for the happy combination of circumstances which has enriched the English school with a work likely, not only to form a strong pillar to its happily rising fortunes, but also to be an incentive to future effort and ever higher achievement.

VERDI'S *FALSTAFF*

I

(1893)

[I wrote two papers at the time of the first performance of *Falstaff*, one for the *Daily Graphic* and one for the *Fortnightly Review*. I have reprinted both here, although in some few particulars they overlap; because the first is rather a description of the *première* on February 9, 1893, and as such may in future have some value for the chronicler, and the second is more of a general consideration of the position and trend of the opera itself from an artistic standpoint.]

Falstaff has come and has conquered, and the world of music is the richer by a masterpiece—a masterpiece of diction as well as of music, a child of which both the parents may be equally proud. And a very lively and laughing child it is, destined to bring many smiles into the faces of its elders now and of its contemporaries hereafter; a living proof that even in this grim ending of the century it is as possible to be merry as in the days of Father Haydn and Mozart.

The book is in every respect admirable—rich in poetry of the highest order, in situations of an ingenuity so clear in workmanship that they seem both simple and spontaneous; rich also in the mastery of fifteenth-century Italian, which the author uses with such ease as to make it appear a most

natural vehicle of expression, and with an absence of all pedantry, which is the highest witness to the depth of his knowledge; above all, an opera book which only a musician could have written for a musician. To Boïto justly belongs the credit of having been the first by influence and by example to pioneer the Italian school of opera into new and untrodden paths; to Verdi the still rarer praise of having, in his fulness of years, adapted the sound and true principles of the younger man to his own inventions. The world of music is full of parallels in its history, and it is impossible not to recall the relations between Haydn and Mozart a century ago when we are considering the bond between Verdi and Boïto now.

The book of *Falstaff* is entirely based upon *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; a few speeches and ideas from *Henry IV.* are made use of in its course, notably the monologue of Falstaff upon 'Honour,' and his humorous allusions to the rubicund nose of Bardolph:—'Thou art our admiral; thou bearest the lantern in the poop, but 'tis in the nose of thee: thou art the Knight of the Burning Lamp.' (*Henry IV.*, Part I., act iii., scene 3.) For the purposes of opera much has been condensed. The number of characters has been slightly diminished, and the discomfitures of Falstaff have been reduced from three to two. The second visit to Mistress Ford and his escape in the disguise of Mother Prat, have been most wisely discarded. The idea, however humorous in the original and on paper, in action always borders on the farcical and impossible. A very thin line separates it from a vulgarity, which comic actors are

only too liable to accentuate. By its omission the work remains a comedy, and never becomes extravagant. The action therefore takes place in six scenes: the sending of the letters by Falstaff; their reception by the merry wives; the mission of Mrs. Quickly to the knight and his interview with Ford under an assumed name; Falstaff's visit to the two dames and his escape in the buck basket; the second mission of Mrs. Quickly and the plotting of the *dénouement* in Windsor Forest; and the final discomfiture and repentance of Sir John at the Herne Oak. Running through these main incidents is the secondary interest of the loves of Fenton and Anne Page, which is most ingeniously worked in, and at one point is made the pivot of a most amusing situation, the invention of the librettist. In the second scene of the second act, where Mrs. Ford receives the knight, the 'arras' mentioned in Shakespeare is altered to a screen, behind which Falstaff, at Mrs. Page's entry, conceals himself. After he has been covered up in the buck basket Fenton and Anne Page meet, but upon the approach of Ford and his friends they in turn conceal themselves. During a sudden pause in the general confusion and search a kiss is heard from behind the screen. Ford throws it down, only to find his daughter and her lover, and the basket is thrown from the window into the Thames. The situation, though apparently complicated, is, in action, perfectly simple and natural, and gains rather than loses by the double interest. For the rest of the plot the play of Shakespeare is a sufficient guide. It is impossible to avoid regretting the disappearance of Master Slender from the persons of the drama. To English ears 'O

sweet Anne Page' are words as intimately bound up with the memories of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, as 'To be or not to be' with those of *Hamlet*. But for the sake of a compression, which is as a whole admirably carried out both from the point of view of taste and of stagecraft, the character has been merged in that of Dr. Caius, and the familiar thin figure disappears from the group. Former librettists who have adapted this play seem to have experienced the same difficulty as to the multiplicity of characters. In Nicolai's opera the part of Mrs. Quickly, which in Boïto's hands is one of the best drawn of the play, is practically extinguished. Apart from the action, the poetry will amply repay study. Shakespearian critics will find much to admire in the translations, often almost verbal, of the original. Especially happy are the lines about Honour (*Henry IV.*, Part I., Act V., Scene 1) :—

'Può l'onore riempervi la pancia? No. Può l'onor rimettervi uno stinco?—Non può. Nè un piede?—No.—Nè un dito? No. Nè un capello? No. L'onor non è chirurgo.—Ch'è dunque? Una parola. Che c'è in questa parola? C'è dell' aria che vola.'

Equally so is the soliloquy of Ford in the second act. These two *tours-de-force* are enough in themselves to raise the libretto to the dignity of a poem, whether intended for music or not. Below that dignity the work never falls for an instant.

It is impossible to pass from the consideration of the book without drawing attention to the cleverness of the *ensemble* verses. Without being cast in the old stereotyped mould or being unduly trammelled

by forced rhymes, Boïto contrives that nine of his characters should simultaneously utter as many different verses, all exactly balancing each other, all clear and distinctive, without any palpable straining of metre. An admirable example of this will be found on pages 24 and 25 of the printed poem. It is hardly necessary to say how exactly this method of treatment suited the pen of the composer of the quartet in *Rigoletto*.

And the music. With what curiosity has the musical world awaited Verdi's first comic opera! For his first it certainly is: *Un Giorno di Regno*, an opera written to order in his earlier life under the stress of peculiar misery and sorrow, cannot be considered as one of his spontaneous creations, and it has long passed from the memory of the public. Many were the speculations as to its possible style; whether it was to be a descendant of Mozart or of Rossini, of his earlier or later self. A glance at the score is sufficient to show that it is in comedy the sister of *Otello* in tragedy, written on the same 'advanced' lines, but if possible more uncompromising in its details than the tragedy which preceded it. There is absolutely no concession to popular effect, scarcely a fragment which could be detached from its surroundings; in this respect it goes even farther from the old grooves of conventional opera than the later works of Wagner. The parallels to *Otello* and *Falstaff* in Italy are *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger* in Germany. But after first principles the resemblance ceases. Verdi's workmanship is as totally different from Wagner's, as the Italian nation is from the German. The whole work is as sunny as

the composer's garden at Busseto. Clear as crystal in construction, tender and explosive by turns, humorous and witty without a touch of extravagance or a note of vulgarity. Each act goes as quickly as lightning, without halt, almost without slow *tempi*; and the general impression is that not of an opera written for musical effect or for the glorification of the singers, but of an admirable comedy which music has helped to illustrate, to accentuate, and to idealise. It is rightly termed on the title-page *Commedia lirica*.

The hand of the composer of *Otello* is recognisable in the very first bars. The curtain rises almost immediately, and the orchestral figure running through the opening scene is a close relation of the chorus round the bonfire in the first act of its predecessor. The monologue at its close, '*L'Onore!*' is a smiling sister of the Credo of Iago. This scene strikes the keynote of the opera, and decides at once the style and the school to which it belongs. The paramount influence is unmistakable, and it is also the highest that the composer could have identified himself with, that of Beethoven. The close student of the quartets and pianoforte sonatas is apparent everywhere. The composer of the Waldstein Sonata is the ancestor of this great creation. Other influences there are: occasionally that of Meyerbeer, but cleansed of his banalities and tricks; more often a twinkle of the *Meistersinger*. But over it all the unmistakable stamp of Verdi, master of vocal writing, of an orchestration all his own, and of a pure Italian method of expression. His very memories of Beethoven are tinged by his affection for Scarlatti. The

second scene contains many moments of interest, especially an *ensemble* for nine voices, of marvellous intricacy on paper, which sounds as clear as a solo in performance. A portion of this, 'Quel uom è un cannone,' for the four women, unaccompanied, was encored (greatly to the detriment of the remainder of the scene). The gem of the act, and, in my opinion, of the entire opera, is the duet between Fenton and Anne Page. Full of tenderness and delicacy, it exactly expresses the situation. Apparently inobtrusive, as an underplot should be, it gives the momentary repose so needful amid the bustling movement of the rest. In character it recalls the scene between Eva and Hans Sachs in the second act of the *Meistersinger*, but it is far slighter in construction, and of much shorter dimensions. The scene closes with a variation of the *ensemble* heard at its beginning.

The second act is the most effective, both from the point of view of action and of music. The return of Bardolph and Pistol to their master, and their comic repentance is admirable. Not less so is the scene between Mrs. Quickly and the Knight. Her deep curtseys, and the semi-regal reception which she is accorded, are all illustrated with consummate skill. The remainder is composed of the interview between Ford, under the name of Fontana (Brook), and Falstaff, and gives two opportunities which are equally successful in treatment, the boasting triumph of Falstaff, 'Qual tanghero vedrai,' and the semi-tragic soliloquy of Ford, 'È sogno? o realtà,' a passage in many respects more powerful than that which closes the first scene of the first Act. The

exit of the two men is admirably contrived, each requesting the other to precede him, and the two finally departing arm in arm. The second part of the act opens with a brisk quartet for the four women, but the main interest begins with the arrival of Falstaff, who enters while Mrs. Ford is playing the guitar, and sings a few bars *sotto voce* to her accompaniment. In the course of the duet between them occurs a very charming little scherzo for the Knight, 'Quando ero paggio del Duca di Norfolk,' which made an immense effect in performance, and was again (unhappily) repeated. The rest of the act is (with the exception of a very short love passage between Fenton and Anne) all bustle and scurry. So quickly does the music pass by, and so close does the scene play, that there is barely time to appreciate the mastery of the writing; moreover, the intensely comic situation, accentuated as it is by the attack on the screen which hides the lovers, and by the half-smothered ejaculations of Falstaff in the basket, causes the audience to laugh so consumedly, that attention to the notes becomes practically an impossibility. This is, however, only one more proof of the composer's conviction that his function was rather to illustrate and help the action than to exalt his art at the expense of the play. The scene may be said to be an Italian edition of the great *ensemble* in the second act of Cornelius's *Barber of Bagdad*. It does not fall short of it in difficulty, though it is simpler and clearer in construction.

After the excitement and movement of this scene, the composer and the poet must have found it a heavy task to keep up the interest of the third act.

It is not surprising that the opening of the first part falls somewhat short of the rest of the work in grip and in interest. But it contains one masterpiece—the soliloquy of Falstaff over his sack with 'a toast in it.' At one point, when he describes the sensations of the hot wine after his cold bath, 'quivi risveglia il picciol fabbro dei trilli,' the music rises to a great height. The effect is novel, a trill which begins upon one instrument and gradually extends over the whole orchestra, until even the trombones and cymbals are seized with the shaking fit. The result is so impressive as almost to cease to be comic; but of the many flashes of genius in the opera this is perhaps the brightest. The scene closes quietly with a very charming movement in mazurka rhythm, graceful and piquant, but not producing much effect from a dramatic standpoint. It is obvious that both authors and public here were in need of a moment's rest from the turmoil of the preceding act. The final scene in the forest of Windsor is a complete success. The extremely delicate and fanciful fairy music comes as a surprise. To avoid the examples of *Oberon* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* in such a situation was difficult enough, but Verdi has invented a new fairy music, wholly distinct in style, and quite as appropriate as that of his predecessor, Weber, and his contemporary, Mendelssohn. After the discovery and comic torture of Falstaff, his repentance is made the occasion of a very humorous ensemble—a species of Litany, with a refrain from the Knight of 'Ma salvagli l'addomine'; a dangerous episode, perhaps, but so delicately and tastefully handled as to avoid all occasion of offence. After

this point seems to come the only moment in the entire opera where a slight shortening would improve the effect. At no other place is it possible to imagine a cut, so closely does the action play, and with such knowledge and experience of the stage is the music composed. Admirers of *Otello* will have remarked a similar phenomenon in that opera. No undue length is felt for a moment, and the excision of a single bar would be an operation impossible to the most skilful stage-surgeon. This quality so far applies also to *Falstaff*, but at this point, at a first hearing, the action for a very short interval appears to hang fire. It is, however, most probably the fault of the hearer, and not of the authors, who know what they mean, and have had the advantage of testing the work in innumerable rehearsals. At any rate, whatever momentary doubt is felt is very soon cleared away by the finale, the boldness and novelty of which are inimitable. Falstaff ejaculates, 'Un coro e terminiam la scena,' and leads off the subject of an elaborate fugue. Not a *fugato*, or a *stretto*, but a genuinely worked-out fugue, with subject, answer, counter-subject, inversions, and pedal points all complete, the characters all standing in a row in front of the footlights facing the audience. The idea is so brazen-faced as almost to take away the breath of the dramatic purist. But its workmanship and its novelty gain the day. The opera could have no better finish. It sends every one home in good humour, conscious not merely that they have laughed and amused themselves, but also that they have listened to a healthy and invigorating work of the highest art written by a master of the craft. It

would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this wholesome opera at the present important crisis of young musical Italy. It cannot fail to do much to soften the realism and tone down the harshness with which Zolaism seems to have infected the younger generation. Verdi has shown in *Otello* how to be tragic without brutality, and in *Falstaff* how to be comic without vulgarity. He speaks, too, with the weight of a veteran of seventy-nine years, but imbued with the sympathy and tenderness of a man in the prime of life. Moreover, after these two works, it is impossible to say for a moment that he is in any respect behind the youngest of his countrymen in the principles of his art. In its technique he is as a giant among minnows.

One lack is apparent in the opera as a whole, and as I feel it to be an important one I will not hesitate to give it as my opinion. No two hearers of a new work agree as to the relative merits of various scenes or passages, nor do I put my criticism forward save as the impression produced upon myself. I felt the want of some one broad melody, which, without being necessarily too obtrusive, would give a rest-point to the ear, and would clamp and cement together the whole. It is difficult to find an example of my meaning, except in contemporary music. In Mozart the method is so different that no parallel is possible, though even at the most bustling moments he never fails to provide a repose when needed, witness the second finale of *Figaro*. The only example I can give which, in its different school, is at all illustrative, is the 'Preislied' in the *Meistersinger*, not so much its actual presentation in the form of a song as its

influence in providing an undercurrent of quiet repose even when it is only suggested. Such a moment as the passage where the watchman walks up the lonely street in the moonlight is not to be found in Verdi's score. The result is that the impression at the end of the evening is one of scurry and vivacity alone, without the wished-for balance of deeper feeling. This would be, perhaps, foreign to an Italian nature, which would prefer its fun to be as unadulterated as its seriousness. But to English minds there is a certain subtle tragedy in the character of Falstaff, which the Latin races have always failed to grasp, and of which the key is supplied in the narrative of his death. At the same time it is difficult to see how this missing link could have been supplied as the book stands. The loves of Fenton and Anne Page are too fragile and too secondary in the action to be made the vehicle for its introduction. Still the lack is there, after a first hearing, as it seemed to be also after the perusal of the score. It is of course possible that more intimate acquaintance with the opera will remove the impression. With or without it the opera will certainly live.

The performance at the Scala was, as an *ensemble*, almost perfect. The first meed of praise is due to the orchestra, who accompanied to such perfection as to be at times wholly forgotten, and only felt as a support. Their fire and force when needed were immense, their gradations of tone delicate in the extreme. The vice of an eternal *mezzo-forte* was wholly absent, and the gems with which Verdi has studded his elaborate score all glittered in their settings. The brass instruments were superbly played,

with brilliancy and without blare. Mascheroni conducted with consummate mastery and care. Of the singers, Maurel, by virtue of his *rôle* and of his abilities, deserves first mention. That his upper notes (and in the part there are many) were not of as pure a quality as of old is no fault of his but of old Father Time. But this was scarcely a drawback. His conception of the character was admirable, never overstepping the border-line between comedy and farce. His enunciation of the words was so clear and his declamation so incisive that the purchase of a book of words seemed a work of supererogation. Scarcely inferior to him was Pini-Corsi, who took the part of Ford. His singing of the soliloquy in the second act, and his acting in the screen scene were quite admirable. Of the ladies it is impossible to speak so favourably. Signorine Guerrini and Pasqua, who took the parts of Mrs. Page and Mrs. Quickly respectively, were the best; next to them, Signorina Stehle, who sang the *rôle* of Anne Page. The part of Mrs. Ford was unfortunately in the hands of a singer whose *vibrato* was so persistent that at times it was difficult to tell within three tones the note which she intended to sing. This fault, from a superabundance of which the male voices were fairly free, seemed in the case of the soprani to be a malignant disease. The short unaccompanied quartet in the first act, consisting entirely of a rapid staccato, was so quavered and shaken that it was a matter of sheer impossibility to follow either the harmonies or even the single notes. To succeed in imparting a vibrato to a staccato quaver at presto speed would have seemed an absurd paradox, but, strange to say, the

feat was accomplished. It is a matter of serious danger to music that this evil habit is spreading everywhere. Not only is *cantabile* destroyed by it, not only is the finest melody corrupted by it, but the *vibrato* itself, a power by which, when used in its proper place, an overpowering effect can be produced, is reduced to a position of that contempt which familiarity proverbially breeds. It is the duty of the Land of Song to keep its sources of vocal supply pure. If singing is polluted in Italy the world will be infected by the stream. The very street boys there are afflicted with this vocal *delirium tremens*. With a tribute to the unobtrusive but very musical singing of Garbin in the small part of Fenton my remarks as to the cast may close. The chorus, which had but very little to do, did it admirably.

Even the Scala has seldom witnessed a more brilliant scene or a more striking success. The number of times which Verdi had to appear seemed countless, and Boïto, whom, owing to his accustomed modesty, it was difficult to find, had to share, as he so richly deserved, in the triumph. The mounting of the opera was admirable. Some of the scenes will gain by being presented on a smaller stage, but the view of Windsor Forest could scarcely be improved. So perfect are the acoustical properties of the theatre that it was possible to hear without strain the most delicate passages in the orchestration.

After the triumph in the Opera House, Verdi was made the hero of a demonstration in the streets. A large crowd accompanied his carriage, and stood cheering opposite his hotel until he was obliged to appear on the balcony, and bow his acknowledgments.

But through all the excitement and triumph he remained what he is, a quiet, calm, modest gentleman; one of those intellectual giants who scorn to trade upon their greatness, and are content to be as other men are.[1]

II

The dangers of indiscreet prophecy are proverbial, and instances of it are many and occasionally amusing. Perhaps no more striking example could be found than one short sentence which occurs at the close of the article 'Verdi,' in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*,[2] which was written before the production of *Otello* by a warm admirer and enthusiastic compatriot of the great composer. It runs as follows:—'For the musical critic, *Othello*, whatever it may be, can neither add to nor detract from the merits of its author. From *Oberto Conte di S. Bonifacio* to the *Messa di Requiem*, we can watch the progressive and full development of Verdi's genius, and though we have a right to expect from him a new masterpiece, still nothing leads us to believe that the new work may be the product of a *nuova maniera*.' After the experience of *Otello* in February 1887, and of *Falstaff* in February 1893, these remarks can scarcely fail to raise a smile. But their author may be forgiven for failing to foresee that the seven-leagued boots which carried Verdi

[1] I went with Boïto to his room next day, and we found him much perturbed and annoyed by a letter which he had just received from the Government, offering him the title of 'Marchese di Busseto.' His comment on it was characteristic: 'I thought they knew that a musician I was born, and a musician I remain.'

[2] First Edition.

from *Nabucco* to *Aïda*, would prove capable of taking another stride, and a longer one. Mazzucato left two important factors out of his calculations—the influence of Boïto and the perennial youthfulness of the composer. It is scarcely necessary to insist that Verdi has developed a *nuova maniera*, a third style as distinct from his two earlier methods as is that of Beethoven; but differing from the Bonn master in that the latest manner is of the nature rather of a radical change than of a natural development of the earlier growth. To lay down roughly the landmarks of Verdi's three styles is not a matter of great difficulty. The first may be said to extend from *Oberto* to the *Forza del Destino*, the second from *Don Carlos* to the *Requiem*, and the third from *Otello* to ——, here we may happily leave a blank. I am loth to follow the example of the *Dictionary*, and to put a full stop to the catalogue. The musical world may yet be startled by a new opera as far in advance of *Falstaff* as *Otello* is of *Aïda*. To a man of such strength and health, such brains and wealth of imagination, nothing is impossible. His is not the nature of a Rossini, who, after a series of successes made in the full vigour of manhood, sat down and spent the rest of his witty existence chewing the cud of memory; but rather that of a Titian, whose work ceased only with the breath of life. There is a curious parallel between these two great artists; the painter who worked without apparent loss of power to the age of ninety-nine, and only died by the accident of the plague; and the composer who produced his best and most mature work at the age of seventy-nine, and is to all appearance capable of

as much more, both good and new. In such hale veterans this century has happily been rich, and Italy can claim her share. In Verdi she has a source of pride which she is not slow to appreciate or backward in acclaiming. Those who lately witnessed the triumph of his last opera could not fail to be deeply impressed, on the one hand, by the touching affection which leavened the enthusiasm of the country—an affection felt and expressed alike by king and by peasant—and on the other, by the modesty and dignity with which it was accepted by the great composer. So devoid was he of all self-assertion, that he even expressed his regret that so vast a concourse of strangers should have taken the trouble to come from all parts of Europe for the *première*, and declared that he preferred the days of his earlier career, when his operas were accepted or rejected on their merits alone, and when the test was independent of any considerations of personal popularity. A glance at his honest eyes was enough to satisfy the hearer that these were his true convictions and no affectations of humility. Such men are at all times rare; but living as Verdi does at a moment when the younger Italian school, which he has so long fostered almost single-handed, is rapidly coming to the fore, and is reaching an important crisis of its development, his influence for good cannot possibly be over-rated, nor can it fail to be productive of the highest results.

It is interesting to turn for a moment to the earlier works of Verdi's long career, and to notice the points of difference between them and the works of his maturity, as well as the threads of similarity which

connect them. At all times vivid and poetical, the earlier operas have undoubtedly been defaced by a certain lack of refinement, and by a neglect of the balance which should exist between orchestra and singers. The very superabundance of melodic gift which seems almost to inundate them interferes with the dramatic cohesion and cloys rather than satisfies the ear. The orchestral treatment, although more important than it had been in the hands of Donizetti and Bellini, was more influenced by their methods than by the sounder traditions of Cherubini. Many instances of this bald handling of the orchestra will be found in page after page of the *Trovatore* and the *Traviata*, where the most tragic and highly wrought passages of vocal declamation are supported by an ordinary waltz rhythm in the accompaniment, which indeed seems to be doing its best to belie the drift of the words sung. Sometimes traces of the most unqualified banality occur, as witness the music assigned to the stage-band at the opening of *Rigoletto*, a passage which it is almost impossible to listen to without a feeling of aversion. But even these worst moments possess in the very outspokenness of their vulgarity a certain genuine ring, a spontaneity of expression, which cannot fail to bring home to the listener that the composer is an honest man doing his best according to his lights. It is this honesty of purpose, coupled with an immense fertility of imagination and adaptability of temperament, which has permeated Verdi's life-work, and resulted in this his latest, his most powerful, and his most beautiful composition. It is precisely this genuineness to which Meyerbeer, with all his astuteness, was unable to attain. Verdi's

was an unpolished metal, Meyerbeer's a stage tinsel. Verdi's was a natural genius, Meyerbeer's a cultivated ingenuity. The natural process was in the one case a power of taking the highest burnish and polish, in the other a gradual thinning of the veneer, and the eventual exposure of the inferior material which underlay it. Some similarity of workmanship at one time undoubtedly existed between these two men; but their ways divided as sharply and trended as differently as those of Meyerbeer and his contemporary Weber. Between Verdi and his great German colleague Wagner there is a far closer relationship of method. But only of method, and not of workmanship based on the method. The styles of these two composers vary so completely, that it seems impossible to assert that the Italian learned from the German. It would be fairer to say, as perhaps posterity will say, that the immense development of opera in the latter half of the nineteenth century was rather the result of a natural process than the work of any one man; that *Tristan*, *Carmen*, and *Otello* are only so many landmarks on the road of progress which each country was making in its own way. In one respect Wagner had the advantage (if a questionable one) of his brethren. He had a pen for words as well as notes, for criticism and essay as well as for poetry and music; his conception of the relations of music and drama were therefore laid before the unmusical as well as the musical public, and that with much fire and fury, and with quips and thrusts which directed the eyes of all Europe to his polemical genius. With these methods Verdi has had nothing to do. He has contented

himself with working out his own ideas on music paper, and trusting his fame to the application of theories alone, while abstaining from their discussion. He has therefore, by the mere fact of making no ferocious enemies, created no cult of aggressive friends. But his best work will not suffer on that account, and the Italian may be counted, at any rate, the happier man. The very dissimilarity of the natures of Wagner and Verdi accentuate the identity of their principles, and go to prove that solid truth was at the bottom of the well from which each drew his inspiration.

The principles were harder to apply in Italy than in Germany. Wagner found the way prepared for him by Weber and by Spontini, who though of Italian birth identified himself with Germany. There the orchestra was already raised to the position of a participator in the drama, vocal effect had already begun to give way to truth of expression. Not so in Italy. The latest work of Rossini was rather a French than an Italian opera, and the threadbare productions of Donizetti and Bellini were all that intervened between the school of the *Barbiere* and the beginnings of Verdi. It would not have been surprising if, under these circumstances he had turned from his sources of inspiration to the works of other countries; but this is precisely what Verdi did not do. He had the consciousness of the strength he derived from contact with his native soil, and determined for good or ill to work upon it alone. *Otello* and *Falstaff*, both as uncompromising in their fidelity to dramatic truth of expression as *Tristan* and the *Meistersinger*, are

both unmistakably Italian operas, in warmth of feeling, in force of declamation, and in wealth of purely vocal melody. In one respect at least Verdi's later works are more satisfactory in their effect upon the public than those of Wagner, namely in concentration. The very fact that Wagner was his own librettist was necessarily detrimental to his sense of proportion. Immense as was the advantage which he gained by uniting all the elements of construction of a music-drama in his own person, they were undoubtedly counterbalanced by the disadvantages arising from the lack of discussion and of criticism. There was no independent composer to curb the redundancies of the librettist, no independent librettist to warn the composer of undue lengthiness. The result is that, except under the special conditions of Bayreuth, it may safely be said no work of Wagner's is given in any opera house without many and extensive cuts;[1] cuts moreover that from the point of view of actual physical comfort are necessary to the average theatre-goer, be he ever such a devotee of the master. In the case of Verdi this is wholly different. In Arrigo Boïto he has found a fellow-worker who is at once a poet and a dramatist of the highest rank, and in addition is gifted with the keenest musical perception. Conference, discussion, and mutual criticism have done their work and eliminated all the *longueurs* both in acting and in music; as a consequence it is hard to lay one's finger on one single scene either in *Otello* or in *Falstaff* where a cut would not absolutely injure the construction or mutilate the piece. Both

[1] This was in 1893: but what was true of the past may yet be true of the future.

operas are therefore of reasonable length and fatigue neither audience nor performers. If on the one hand it is impossible to credit Verdi with the possession of the immense power which created the Death March in the *Dusk of the Gods*, we are equally unable to credit Wagner with the power of exquisite vocal writing which is the glory of the Italian master. It may be urged that such comparisons are odious, but to the mind of the unprejudiced admirer of both these giants they are not so. They are only instructive. Neither creator could, even if he would, change his nature; the fact that each was true to his own, is the highest testimony to the value of their respective creations.

I have said that *Falstaff* is written upon the same principle as the *Meistersinger*. It is curious, however, to note how each master uses these principles in his own way. In the *Meistersinger* the orchestra is the pivot of the whole, and asserts itself markedly to be so. In *Falstaff* it plays the same part, but in such a way as to call no attention to its importance. It is rather felt than heard, much as in *Don Juan* and the *Marriage of Figaro*. In the *Meistersinger* the voice parts go entirely by the natural declamation of the words without regard as to whether the result is melodic and vocal or the reverse. In *Falstaff* the declamation is so perfect as to be (in the words of Boïto) a physiological study, and yet the notes sung never cease to be melodious and grateful to the singer. A most happy instance of this is the phrase sung by Mrs. Quickly at her entrance in Act II. to the word 'Reverenza.' In the *Meistersinger* there are no full closes, save at the fall of the curtain, and the music

runs continuously on from beginning to end. In *Falstaff* there are numerous full closes, which are, however, so artfully conceived that they give the impression of continuity without sacrificing the relief to the ear. In the *Meistersinger* there are definite phrases associated with definite personalities and situations; in *Falstaff* the same result is produced by orchestral colouring and by the use and interchange of certain definite rhythms. In the *Meistersinger* there are two or three complete lyrical passages, songs, if they may be so termed without offence, which can be performed separately from the work without much sacrifice of effect or of value. In *Falstaff* there are none, nor is it possible to repeat any passage without wholly spoiling the scene. The encores, which, though few, were insisted on at the Scala, amply proved how fatal any break, however short, in the play was to its unity of purpose.

It will thus be seen that *Falstaff* is as modern in construction as its German predecessor; and, if it is impossible to assign it quite so high a position in the catalogue of masterpieces, that is only because it is not so rich in human interest, and fails to touch so deeply the emotions. This is, however, the character of the play. There is no creation in it so sympathetic as the figure of Hans Sachs, no element of rest so satisfying as the moment where the watchman walks up the deserted street in the moonlight; no set melody so riveting as the 'Preislied.' In these points, and in these alone, it falls short of the high-water mark of the *Meistersinger*. The charm, the vivacity, the wit of the Italian are in every page. To expect more would be to expect Verdi to belie his

nationality. We do not the less admire a Giovanni Bellini because we may prefer a Dürer; nor do we expect from the Venetian the qualities of the Nürnberger. The preference will be according to the temperament and race of the hearer. A Teuton will prefer the *Meistersinger* and a Latin will prefer *Falstaff*. It is enough for us that we possess both.

No criticism upon the later works of Verdi would be complete without a reference to the important share in their production held by Arrigo Boïto. To the brilliant composer of *Mefistofele* is to be traced the force which impelled Verdi to start afresh upon operatic work. It can hardly be denied that his influence has had a powerful effect on the direction of the older composer's mind. It is not for the first time in history that such a bond has united the elder and the younger generation. Blow and Henry Purcell obviously had common interest and sympathies of a similar sort, and to a still more striking extent Haydn and Mozart. Nor was Wagner himself uninfluenced by younger men, as witness the effect of Cornelius's *Barber of Bagdad* upon the *Meistersinger*. So it is with Verdi and Boïto. Certainly the composer never before had librettos so worthy of his genius, or so suggestive to his imagination as the poems of *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

The construction of *Falstaff* is extremely clear and concise. There are three acts almost equal in length, each subdivided into two scenes also more or less of equal length. The persons of the Shakespeare play are reduced in number. The character of Slender is merged in that of Dr. Caius, a proceeding which cannot fail to cause regret; for the latter remains a

somewhat colourless and troublesome figure, while the well-known thin and sentimental Slender would have made an admirable foil to the fire and jealousy of Ford and the fat and humorous hero. Without Slender there is no pendant to Falstaff. This and this only is the weak point of the casting of the play. The alternations of scenes are admirably conceived, and happily contrasted. The poetry is no whit inferior to the construction; many passages, both of translation and of original matter, are well worthy of a separate existence. As examples of excellent and almost literal reproduction of Shakespeare may be mentioned the monologue upon Honour, which has been ingeniously worked into the first scene, and the speech of Ford at the close of the first scene of the second act. The original passages are naturally of greater interest, chief among them a sonnet sung by Fenton at the beginning of the scene in Windsor Forest, a perfect specimen of its kind. The Italian is often difficult, even to the natives; for Boïto has adopted a number of fifteenth-century methods of expression which give an archaic flavour to his text; these are not always easy to follow, and the series of epithets which are flung about from mouth to mouth in the final scene almost require an annotated edition to elucidate them. Notwithstanding this occasionally obscure diction, the poet's knowledge of early Italian literature is so profound, and his use of it apparently so natural, that the pedantry which in less skilled hands might so easily have asserted itself is wholly absent.

The difficulty of adapting the plot of the *Merry Wives of Windsor* for operatic purposes has always

lain in the fact that the discomfitures of the fat knight are too numerous, and one of them (his escape in the guise of the old woman of Brentford) most difficult to manage with any semblance of reality. Moreover, it has a trace of vulgarity which is only too easily accentuated by the least carelessness in acting or dress. This scene Boïto has with great judgment suppressed, reducing the attempts and failures of *Falstaff* to two, and gaining a greatly enhanced effect by this concentration. Moreover, he has vastly strengthened the *dénouement* of the scene of the buck-basket by introducing a double interest. He conceals Fenton and Anne Page behind the screen (which replaces Shakespeare's arras) when Falstaff is covered up in the basket, and this gives occasion for a complication of the most humorous kind; so laughter-provoking indeed did it prove that at the first performance the music became almost inaudible owing to the unrestrained mirth of the audience. A word of praise must also be given to the *ensemble* verses, sometimes as many as nine in number, mostly written in the most complicated rhythms, but all fitting together without strain, while giving the composer every opportunity for varied treatment. Nor has Verdi failed to reach the standard of excellence attained by the poet. His subtlety of characterisation is as keen as it was in the days of the quartet in *Rigoletto*, and the matter with which he has clothed his manner is superior in refinement, in force, and in delicacy to the earlier work. He writes for nine voices with such consummate ease that no sensation of undue complication is felt for an instant. In this respect the *ensembles* in

Falstaff are superior to those in *Otello*, where, as in the finale of the second act, it is impossible not to plead guilty to a certain sense of bewilderment.

To criticise separate portions of the music is almost as impossible as to select fragments for concert use. The work is so evenly balanced that hardly any scene is superior to the rest. Audiences, however, will have their favourite phrases and passages, and as such may be mentioned the monologue on Honour, the short love-duet between Fenton and Anne Page (the most fascinating and charming number in the score), the duet between Mrs. Quickly and Falstaff, and the whole scene between Ford and the Knight; the short scherzo, 'Quando era un paggio,' the song of the fairies in Windsor Forest, and last, but not by any means least, the final fugue. But many equally interesting though more unassuming passages will strike the hearer as he becomes more and more familiar with the work. There is hardly a page without a gem, and not a trace of ugliness from cover to cover. Moreover, there are virtues of omission as well as of commission; for *Falstaff* is happily devoid of those awkward moments which used to be called stage-waits, but have lately been dignified with the name of *intermezzi*. Perhaps younger Italy, always on the look out for novelty, and apt to imitate innovations, will amuse itself by trying to write final fugues to its operas. If it takes this healthy exercise, it assuredly will do itself no harm, even if the fugues are dull, which Verdi's are not, and have to be cut out in performance, which his never will be.

But it is not merely the music itself which is new in style, the orchestration is also strikingly fresh and

original. The composer has hit the happy mean between superabundance and poverty. The instruments are always at work upon something which repays attention, but never interfere with the voice, or with the enunciation of an important sentence or a witty phrase. The consequence is that attention is never diverted from the stage, while the band is almost unconsciously helping to elucidate the situation. Many of the effects, such as the now famous mountain of shakes, where Falstaff swallows his 'quart of sack with a toast in it,' are almost overpowering in force and directness. Played as they were by the admirable orchestra of the Scala, all such points told to the full. The delicacy of the fairy music, so different in style and conception from that of Weber and Mendelssohn, was realised in a manner which must have rejoiced the master himself as much as it did his audience. In a word, the orchestra, which Mascheroni directed with consummate skill, understood to the full the art of accompanying without loss of tone or monotony of detail. Unnoticed by the mass of the audience (and that is the greatest meed of praise which it is possible to bestow), it reached a level of perfection far superior to that attained by the vocalists. The latter, with the solitary exception of Pini Corsi, who sang the part of Ford with surprising force and ability, were individually unequal to the task of reaching the ideal of the work. The many excellences of Maurel, as actor and as declaimer, as vocalist and as artist, were counterbalanced by the fact that his voice was not equal to the task, and his conception of the part of Falstaff was too heavy and at times too tragic. The

weight of the Knight should be treated as Lablache, the ideal representative of the hero, would have treated it—the body of a mammoth with the lightness of a feather. To expect this of an artist of Maurel's temperament is, perhaps, hypercritical, and it may be conceded that it is better to be too tragic than too farcical in the conception. But after all it is the middle course alone which would be the perfect rendering of the creation of Shakespeare, and that Maurel undoubtedly did not succeed in taking. Apart from individual criticism, it might be said that the *ensemble* was excellent, especially in the acting and declamation; in this respect the initial performances will scarcely be equalled again. It could hardly be otherwise, seeing that composer and librettist themselves directed some forty rehearsals, which were attended with unswerving loyalty by the artists. It will be both curious and interesting to note what reception will await *Falstaff* in its future career in various countries. It is possible that its greatest success will be made out of Italy, which is more or less (as far as the masses are concerned) taken aback by its novelty and uncompromising idealism, and is, as in the case of *Otello*, desirous of more tune in the treble with the accompaniment in the bass. If it were not for political reasons which on this occasion have warped her better judgment, France might be expected to welcome it as warmly as she could present it perfectly. But so bitter is the feeling between the two countries[1] that even the appreciation of art is tied and bound by the demon of jealousy. In Germany, and especially in Vienna, we

[1] Tempora mutantur.

may forecast a completely warm welcome, tempered by a few sneers from the elect of Bayreuth, who admit the existence of only one composer of music-dramas. In England it is sure of a warm welcome, alike for its faithfulness to Shakespeare and for its intrinsic merits. It is to be hoped that its first appearance here will be made on a stage of medium size. The Scala was undoubtedly too large for it, although the acoustic properties of that immense building are so perfect that scarcely any detail was lost. The Lyceum Theatre, which was, of course, too small for an opera of the colossal proportions of *Otello*, would be admirably adapted for its sister comedy. But wherever and whenever it is produced, it is certain to make its mark, and to keep its hold upon the stage.

We have yet to see the effect which will be produced upon the operas of its contemporaries and successors by Verdi's last works. If *Otello* tended towards realism, and in a way was responsible for the cruel directness, not to say brutality, of such works as *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Falstaff* may be trusted to bring back the desire for perfect workmanship, for ideal beauty, and for symmetrical finish. As such it is doubly welcome. The praise it has met with on all sides has been the same which it would have deserved if it had been composed by a man in the full vigour of youth. No apology is needed on the score of the writer's years. We may, therefore, unlike the unlucky critic quoted at the opening of this article, hope for more work equally strong, perfect, and healthy; the work of a master who is already enrolled amongst the immortals.

THE MUSIC OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[1]

(1905)

THE last volume of the *Oxford History of Music* has appeared under circumstances of exceptional sadness. The first feeling which it arouses is one of lasting regret that its pages have never been turned by its author, and that the pen which wrote them is laid by. No critic can approach the discussion of its contents without an overpowering sense of responsibility and reverence. It compels both, by reason of its breadth of view and its mastery of learning and research, and in a yet higher degree, because any disagreement with its method and conclusions must remain uncontested by a brain whose critical gifts were of the most brilliant and powerful of our day. But Dannreuther was not made of the stuff to allow sentiment to override opinion; and as he would have welcomed lively discussion of his handiwork in his life, so he would have protested against any modification of it after his death. He spoke out himself, and would have resented hushed voices in reply. 'Auf denn! an's Werk,' says Klingsor, *Advocatus Diaboli*, *alias* Critic.

[1] A review of Dannreuther's volume, 'The Romantic Period,' the sixth of the *Oxford History of Music*.

The first point which catches the eye is the concluding paragraph of Mr. Hadow's prefatory note :—

> When the *Oxford History* was first planned, it appeared advisable to end with Schumann, and to leave to some future historian the more controversial topics of our own time. This view it has been found necessary to modify, and the present volume contains reference to the principal works, of whatever date, which in origin or character can be directly attributed to the Romantic movement.

Modification is scarcely the term to apply to a drastic alteration which brings the History down to the death of Verdi in 1901, thereby necessitating a reconsideration of the title and raising serious misgivings as to its general balance of design. The title itself, 'The Romantic Period,' is open to question. Music has always been in touch with Romance, and did not suddenly become so at the beginning of the nineteenth century. If Romance in music may be roughly defined as the influence of poetical feeling expressed in terms of sound, or, as Dannreuther more tersely puts it, 'poetical suggestion by musical means,' it was not absent in any of the periods covered by the preceding five volumes, but grew and developed side by side with the technique of the art itself. Who can deny to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven (witness the slow movement of the D major trio), or to Schubert the highest qualities of Romantic influence? Nor does this volume deny them. But its title becomes thereby a misnomer, a concession, in fact, to a popular and unfounded *façon de parler*, for it arrogates to the nineteenth century that which is contemporaneous with music itself. Moreover, its pages in many instances prove that the history is one not so much

of the influence of Romance as of the extravagant culture of over-elaborated Romance. Having regard to the apt and fit titles of the earlier volumes, it will be obvious that the proper name of this one is 'The Music of the Nineteenth Century'; this would be in accordance with its contents, with one startling exception. The composers whose works form the basis of this History range from Weber to Max Bruch and Grieg. The list includes Sullivan, born in 1842, Goetz, in 1843; it covers the development of opera from Weber to Wagner, and of absolute music from Mendelssohn to Bruckner; but of the great master who kept the true traditions of the royal line of absolute music, and who united in himself the mastery both of design and of the purest elements of refined Romance, Johannes Brahms, there is but an occasional passing mention. This *lacuna* gravely damages both the value and the balance of the book. It is here that the living hand of Dannreuther is missed, and disastrously; for the sound common-sense which was one of his greatest gifts would have enabled him in an instant to grasp the situation when he had the volume before him complete. No one can deny to the 'Johannes Kreisler, Junr.,' of Düsseldorf days, to the author of the 'Magelone Lieder' of maturer development, the closest connection with Romance. The History, then, was designed to close with the death of Schumann. As the book grew, such a rigid line became impossible—if only for the fact that most of Schumann's contemporaries outlived him for decades (in the case of Verdi, who was only three years his junior, for forty-five years)—and to end it in 1856 was equivalent to ringing down the curtain in the middle

of an act, and at the very moment of its most interesting situation. It ought to have become obvious at once that if the growth of the dramatic school was to be carried to its legitimate climax in Wagner, it was impossible, without robbing the work of its most interesting and instructive quality, to omit the growth of absolute music to its legitimate climax in Brahms. In a future volume Brahms would be out of place. He belongs to the period of his contemporaries, Cornelius, Kirchner, Goetz, Jensen, Raff, over whom, even in the opinion of those who least admire him, he towered, to say the least, by force of will and earnestness of purpose; and his right place is in this volume, as was Beethoven's in the previous one.

Apart from this very vital mistake, the *History* calls for little but admiration. The style is lucid, terse, illuminated by touches of dry humour most characteristic of the writer (such as his note on Rubinstein's playing of the Sphynxes in Schumann's *Carnaval*—'of course, the breves are not meant to be played, though Anton Rubinstein used to bang them, slowly, fortissimo—and look solemn'), and as a whole markedly free from prejudice. The system which has been followed of assigning different periods to different writers has its drawbacks. In this period it has resulted in a certain lack of perspective, in exaggerated high-lights upon some personalities and shadows upon others, and in an apparent intermingling of the characteristic tendencies of widely different schools of composers, who, while not insusceptible to mutual influence, have in their main lines been wholly distinct. Mr. Dannreuther makes it appear that Weber was as much a progenitor of the absolute music of

Mendelssohn and of Schumann as he was of the operas of Wagner and Marschner. Here we join issue. The genealogies of opera and of absolute music are, with the exception of an occasional intermarriage, wholly distinct. The line from Bach to Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms is a different family to the line from Gluck to Weber and Wagner. They were often antagonistic, sometimes sympathetic, to each other. But to class them all together, as the system of the *Oxford History* almost compelled Mr. Dannreuther to do (and it is easy to see that the task was often irksome) is a little misleading to the student who believes in evolution. He will have to unravel for himself the lines of succession. In some instances he will get a lead that is brilliantly clever, such as the very powerful influence of Bellini upon Chopin; in others he may be misled, such as the very superficial influence of Weber upon Schumann and early Mendelssohn. The two main arteries of music, absolute and dramatic, are not clearly traced, and it is hardly possible that it could have been otherwise, seeing that the author had to plunge *in medias res.*

From these generalities it may be permissible to pass to some individual cases of apparent inequality. Here we are disarmed by the author's own Preface, for he says that 'a book so closely in touch with the actualities of present-day musical life . . . can hardly avoid the expression of disputable criticisms.' This challenges argument, but of that friendly order which agrees to differ. None the less ought the disputatious points to be discussed. Chief among them would seem to be the excessive attention given to the works of Liszt, which, if they belong to the category of what

Carlyle called 'poor Husks of things,' as the author's criticisms more often than not suggest, do not deserve the number of pages devoted to them; still less so when regard is had to the few but scathing lines in which he dismisses Meyerbeer. Most musicians are alive to the meretricious quality of the works of both these men; but at least Meyerbeer could invent melodies, and develop ideas of which even his appeals to the gallery and devotion to the *claque* could not destroy the real beauty. The man who created the duet in the fourth act of *The Huguenots* ought to have changed places in space and type with Liszt. Artistically there was not much to choose between them as composers, but creatively Meyerbeer was head and shoulders above Liszt. Let it at least be put to his credit that he did not father the realistic programme in concert-music, a development which Dannreuther so justly scorns, as did Wagner before him. Schumann's almost savage 'obituary' notice of the *Prophète* had better have been omitted unless it were instanced as one of his few mistakes in critical judgment. An opera which still holds the stage after fifty-six years can scarcely owe so long a life to artificial means alone, however antipathetic its methods may be to many an honest musician.

The relative values, again, of Mendelssohn and Schumann are scarcely proportionate to their respective influence upon the art. With careful reading it is possible to see that Schumann is considered the predominant partner; but it would seem as if admiration for the finesse and workmanship of Mendelssohn had (on paper) somewhat blinded the author to the far higher and more lasting value of his less dexter-

ous contemporary. In the discussion of Schumann's opera *Genoveva*, there is a curious misapprehension as to its composer's lack of sensitiveness in stage matters; 'to read about brutality is one thing, to see it presented on the stage with the details emphasised by music is a very different matter altogether.' This might apply with force to Puccini's *La Tosca*, but not to Schumann. So far from its being even unintentionally brutal, it is a well-known fact that he spoilt the climax of his opera by refusing from sheer tenderheartedness to bring the husband and the traitor face to face in the last act. Dörffel was present when this scene was urged upon him; his answer was invariably 'Ich *kann's* nicht.'[1] The verdict of Liszt, given in a footnote to page 34, is the truer one. The German stage still preserves it after fifty-five years of a somewhat fitful life (as it has preserved *Euryanthe*) in spite of the superiority of its music to its drama, and of its composer's too obvious distaste for popular effect and footlight glare.

Upon Berlioz, as upon Wagner, Dannreuther's criticism is beyond question sound. Upon Verdi it is equally beyond question inadequate. To assert that Verdi consciously affected cosmopolitan lines is to disregard the whole trend of his artistic career. He never looked to the right or left, writing from inner conviction and with spontaneous expression. In his early days the vulgarity was as sincere as was the refinement in his later years. It is very questionable whether Wagner influenced him at all, as the author

[1] Dörffel told me this himself in 1875, and added that he and a friend had spent a whole evening trying to persuade Schumann to change his mind.

asserts. A creative artist of Verdi's strength, independence, and perennial youth, was much more likely to develop alongside Wagner than because of Wagner. It is right to differentiate his orchestration from Wagner's, but the scores of *Otello*, *Falstaff*, and the *Requiem*, do not justify a suggestion of their inferiority in variety and richness of colour to those of the German master. They are wholly different, but not inferior. Many would assert that in his care for the balance of the orchestra in combination with the human voice the Italian holds the field, as he does also in conciseness and stage technique, and in his stout opposition to Wagner's theory that ugly situations and repulsive characters may be illustrated by ugly and repulsive music. He preferred the more musical manner of painting a villain, which Beethoven exemplified for all time in his characterisation of Pizarro. Opinions as to these two lines of action may differ, but few will have doubts as to which method is the more in accordance with a higher ideal. The balance again between Cornelius and Goetz is unequal, and the far more musical and inventive gift of the latter insufficiently insisted on. Cornelius was a composer by force of will, Goetz by the grace of God: and as a consequence the individual note, spontaneity, and grace of the latter master are as far superior to the poetical weirdness of the former as are Bizet's to Berlioz's. Even all mention of Goetz's opera *Francesca da Rimini*, which contains some of his very best work, is omitted.

With these contentions, adverse criticism of this volume must cease. To enumerate the good points is, indeed, unnecessary, for they will be patent to

every reader; and so sound and sincerely expressed are they, that the value of the book can be but little detracted from by any weakness in its balance or proportion. Apart from the brilliant essays on Berlioz and Wagner, it is imperative, as it is satisfactory, to point to a most timely and convincing vindication of the right of the Wesleys to a prominent place in the history of the nineteenth century. Rarely have their great gifts been so wisely and so justly emphasised. Musicians have too long ignored their influence upon the modern renaissance in England, of which they were as undoubtedly as they were unconsciously the forerunners. The genuinely English school, to which they gave the strongest impulse since Purcell, bears upon the face of it (as witness its present high-water mark, Parry's 'Blest pair of Sirens') the impress of their incentive.

Lastly, but far from least, the volume speaks in no uncertain note concerning the hysterical and artificial tendencies of present day programme music. The notes are few, but are sounded *fortissimo*. 'The stragglers, adherents of Berlioz and Liszt (their name is legion), hardly count.' 'Illustration, apart from design, is in pursuit of a false ideal; it is the Satyr Marsyas, imitating on his flute the music of his native uplands, and doomed to destruction if he challenges the golden lyre of Apollo.' Coming as they do from the intimate friend of Wagner, whom these experimentalists would fain claim as a father, but who so firmly disowned them, and from a musician who, ever on the side of progress, was far more identified with Bayreuth than with Leipzig, these weighty words may call a halt. The artistic ground of England is

happily not yet weakened by over-production. It has not yet shown signs of an exhausted and moribund fertility by taking refuge from sheer lack of ideas in the over-elaboration of detail at the cost of purity of design. Such specimens of unhealthy extravagance as exist are purely imitative of exotic growths. To the wholesome artist this volume will come as an encouragement, and to the wayward as a timely and sympathetic warning.

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